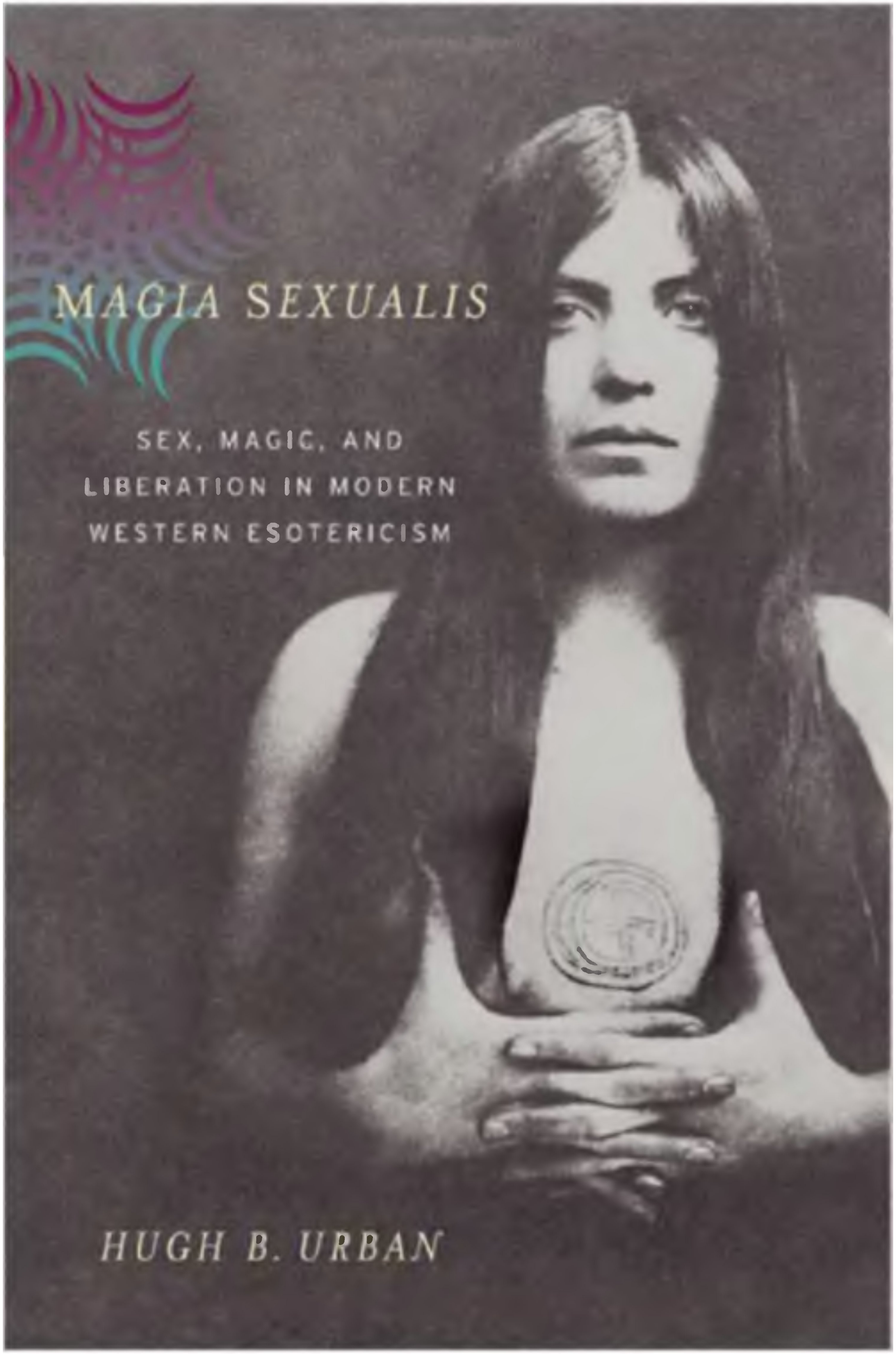

MAGIA SEXUALIS

SEX, MAGIC, AND
LIBERATION IN MODERN
WESTERN ESOTERICISM

HUGH B. URBAN

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Preface, Acknowledgments, and Apologies

Writing about Sex Magic; or, How to Ruin Your Academic Career and Your Sex Life All in One Go

> Sex is a thing of the soul; most people think it but a mere matter of earthly form and physical structure. . . . But its laws, offices, utilities and its deeper and diviner meanings are sealed books to all but about two in a million; yet they ought to have the attentive study of every rational human being, every aspirant to immortality beyond the grave.
>
> PASCHAL BEVERLY RANDOLPH, *Eulis! The History of Love* (1874)

> Sex is hardly ever just about sex.
>
> SHIRLEY MACLAINE

When I first conceived the idea of writing a book on *magia sexualis*, or the tradition of sexual magic in the modern Western esotericism, I immediately encountered two very strong but completely opposite reactions. On one side, many friends and colleagues were naturally intrigued by the possibility of a book that could manage to take seriously a subject that is typically the province of New Age self-help manuals and pornographic Web sites on the Internet, while quoting Aleister Crowley, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Sting all in the same breath. On the other side, many strongly cautioned me against writing this book, sometimes sternly, sometimes emphatically, sometimes for personal reasons, sometimes for academic and professional reasons. After all, what better way to destroy one's scholarly reputation and look like a opportunistic hack than to write a book on sex magic that will very likely join the shelves of Barnes and Noble right beside *Wicca for Lovers* and *The Multi-Orgasmic Man*?

Meanwhile, much to my own (and my significant other's) dismay, I also discovered that a long and intensive investigation of the history of sexual magic is not in fact the best thing for one's personal or sexual relations. By the time I had finished writing this book, I had explored a staggering array of different uses, manipulations, and remarkably creative transformations of the sexual act, not to mention the transgression of nearly every imaginable sexual taboo and social boundary. Therefore, I apologize in advance to any readers who bought this book in the hope of finding the latest secrets of sexual ecstasy or a new method for achieving extended orgasm. The effect of this book upon the reader may well be, as it was for me, not so much erotic titillation as bewildering exhaustion.

Nonetheless, despite these apologetic opening remarks, I do think that both scholars of comparative religions and nonacademic readers should find something of interest in this book. As I will argue throughout, the history of sexual magic in modern esotericism is far from an obscure occult aberration or a superficial masking of sensual lust behind mystical gibberish. On the contrary, it opens some critical insights into the shifting attitudes toward sexuality, gender, religious authority, and social liberation over the last two hundred years. As Douglas Brooks has observed, there are many religious traditions that were at one time largely dismissed, ignored, and even denigrated by "serious" scholars of religion—such as Hindu and Buddhist Tantra, Jewish Kabbalah, and Christian mysticism—that are now considered to be on the cutting edge of current scholarship.[1] In Shirley MacLaine's words, sex is hardly ever just about sex. On the contrary, it lies at the center of a series of much larger social, political, economic, moral, and religious issues that have become increasingly volatile in our own increasingly sex-obsessed late capitalist consumer culture. As Jeffrey Weeks observes, "Sexuality today is, perhaps to an unprecedented degree, a contested zone. It is more than a source of intense pleasure or acute anxiety; it has become a moral and political battlefield. Behind the contesting forces . . . lie contrary beliefs, languages, about the nature of sex; sex as pleasure, sex as sacrament, sex as a source of fear and loathing."[2] And sexual magic, I will suggest, is about far more than the occult fantasy of manipulating or optimizing orgasm. Indeed, it brings into striking relief many of these social, moral, and political tensions, offering some surprising new perspectives of our own cultural history, not to mention the tense, often conflicting relationship between sexuality and spirituality in the modern era.

Perhaps most importantly, the literature on sexual magic forces us to reflect self-consciously and critically on our obsessions with sex and liberation in late capitalist consumer society at the turn of the millennium. As Michel Foucault has aptly observed, "It may well be that we talk about sex more than anything else. . . . We convince ourselves that we have never said enough on the subject. . . . It is possible that where sex is concerned, the most long-winded, the most impatient of societies is our own."[3] In other words, the seemingly "magical" and "liberating" power of sex is by no means some quaint, archaic vestige of our premodern past, but something that continues to fascinate, obsess, and tantalize us to this day. Indeed, one of the best-selling but intensely controversial novels of recent memory is Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code,* which suggests that a secret tradition of Gnostic sexual rituals and veneration of the female body lies hidden beneath the official history narrated by the Catholic Church. The fact that even a fictional narrative of this sort should generate such outrage and debate is telling evidence that these are questions that still haunt us to this day.[4]

A brief note on the title of this book: it is taken from a French translation of the writings of Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–75), arguably the single most important figure in the rise of modern sexual magic. First published in 1931 by a Russian émigré named Maria de Naglowska, who probably also added some inventions of her own, *Magia Sexualis* would become one of the most influential works on the subject and continues to be republished and widely read to this day.[5] My own book might be seen as a critical, historical counterpart to Randolph's text. That is to say, rather than offering a new technique for achieving optimal orgasm or sexually enhanced magical power, this book examines the historical context and sociopolitical implications of sexual magic as it has emerged over the last two hundred years.

There are a great many friends, colleagues, and editors who deserve thanks here: first, the various people who helped me conceive and refine this project, including Wendy Doniger, David Frankfurter, Wouter Hanegraaff, Jeffrey Kripal, Bruce Lincoln, Reed Malcolm, Marco Pasi, Arthur Versluis, Steve Wasserstrom, and Catherine Wessinger; second, those who will no doubt be perplexed or offended by this book, my mother and siblings; third, my truly magical, even if now largely asexual, canine companions, Shakti and Dorje; finally and most importantly, my own "Scarlet Woman," Nancy.

Introduction

Sex Magic, Modernity, and the Search for Liberation

If this secret [of sexual magic], which is a scientific secret, were perfectly understood, as it is not by me after more than twelve years' almost constant study and experiment, there would be nothing which the human imagination can conceive that could not be realized in practice.
ALEISTER CROWLEY, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*

What is peculiar to modern societies is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret.
MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality,* volume 1

It might seem at first somewhat surprising and not a little ironic that the period of the late nineteenth century—the Victorian era, with its rather restrictive attitudes toward the human body and sexuality—gave birth to a large body of literature on the subject of *magia sexualis.* The same period that saw the proliferation of medical manuals on deviant sexuality, such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis,*[1] also saw the proliferation of a growing body of occult works on "affectional alchemy" and the mysteries of sexual intercourse as a profound source of spiritual and magical power. However, as Michel Foucault has argued, the Victorian era was by no means simply an era of prudish repression and denial of sexuality; on the contrary, the nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented explosion of discourse about sex, which was now categorized, classified, debated, and discussed in endless titillating detail.[2] A key part of this discourse on sexuality, I would suggest, was the new literature on sexual magic, which spread throughout the United States, England, and Western Europe from the mid-nineteenth century onward.

Sexuality and the occult arts had, of course, long been associated in the Western imagination. Since at least the time of the Gnostic heresies, and continuing with the persecution of the Templars and the Cathars and the witch hunts of the late Middle Ages, illicit sexuality was often believed to go hand in hand with secret ritual and the black arts.[3] And in various schools of Western esotericism, from Jewish Kabbalah to the Renaissance magic of Marsilio Ficino and the Enlightenment mysticism of Emanuel Swedenborg, the physical union of male and female bodies was regarded as the earthly reflection of the union of the active and passive aspects of the Godhead.[4] But it was really not until the middle of the nineteenth century, with figures like American Spiritualist Paschal Beverly Randolph and his European followers, that we see the birth of a detailed, sophisticated, and well-documented system of sexual magic.[5] That is, for the first time we see not just the use of erotic symbolism to describe the nature of spiritual union but, more specifically, *the use of physical intercourse and genital orgasm as a source of magical power believed to have real effects in the material world.* At the same time, perhaps not accidentally, Western occult traditions were being increasingly mingled with esoteric practices drawn from recently discovered Eastern traditions like Hinduism and Buddhism, and perhaps above all, from erotic manuals such as the *Kama Sutra* and from the esoteric sexual rituals of Indian Tantra. Most of the popular literature now being sold on the topics of "Tantra" and "Sex Magic," I would argue, is a melding of nineteenth-century affectional alchemy and a somewhat garbled version of Indian Tantra, usually with a healthy dose of the *Joy of Sex* thrown in.[6] Today we can not only explore the mysteries of *Celtic Sex Magic* and *Wicca for Lovers,* or browse the *Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex;*[7] we can even join organizations dedicated to the synthesis of Western and Eastern sexual techniques, such as "NAMASTE"—the "New Association of Magical, Sexual, and Tantric Explorers."[8]

In this book, I will critically examine the rise of sexual magic in America and Europe since the mid-nineteenth century, placing it within its larger historical, social, and political contexts. Specifically, I will trace the transmission of *magia sexualis* from the United States to Europe, as it was passed on through authors like Randolph, Theodor Reuss, and the infamous "Great Beast 666," Aleister Crowley. At the same time, I will also examine the impact of Indian traditions like Hindu and Buddhist Tantra, which by the early twentieth century had come to be increasingly fused (and perhaps hopelessly confused) with Western sexual magic. And finally, I will examine the full elaboration of sexual magic in contemporary neo-paganism and modern witchcraft. Since the time of Gerald Gardner in the 1950s and continuing into our own generation with the rise of Satanism and Chaos Magic, many neo-pagan communities have made sexual magic a central component in their larger religious, social, and political vision.

In sum, I will analyze the profound transformation of sexual magic from a terrifying medieval nightmare of heresy and social subversion into a modern ideal of personal empowerment and social liberation.

DEFINING SEXUAL MAGIC: "THE MOST SOLEMN, SERIOUS, POWERFUL AND ENERGETIC MOMENT"

> The nuptive moment, the instant wherein the germs of a possible new being are lodged or a portion of man's essential self is planted within the matrix, is the most solemn, serious, powerful and energetic moment he can ever know on earth.
>
> PASCHAL BEVERLY RANDOLPH, *Eulis! The History of Love*

> Sex is one of the most (some say THE most) powerful energies on the planet. . . . Within our loins lies an energy that has the potential to create ANY reality we want. . . . Religion has done much to suppress our divine sexual nature and has kept the masses ignorant of the potential uses of sexual energy. . . . Sex Magic is based on the belief that the most powerful moment of human existence is the orgasm. Sex Magic is the art of utilizing sexual orgasm to create a reality and/or expand consciousness.
>
> JEFFREY TYE, "Tantra: Sex Magic"

Judging by the titles in most popular bookstores or the rapidly proliferating Web sites dotting cyberspace, sexual magic is understood in fairly simple terms by most American readers: it is most commonly defined as the "art of extended orgasm," or "peak experience in sexual loving." According to Margo Anand, a widely read New Age author, "sexual energy can be refined and expanded, transporting you to realms of orgasmic delight that offer an endless variety of exquisite experiences. This is a type of magic."[9] In this book, however, I will be examining *magia sexualis* in a much more specific and critical way: here I mean not just any loose association of sex and spirituality, and not simply the optimization of sensual pleasure during intercourse, but rather the explicit use of orgasm (whether heterosexual, homosexual, or autoerotic) as a means to create magical effects in the external world. As P. B. Randolph defined it,

> Man, being the chief creature of Nature, allied to all that is . . . and copulative union being the crowning act of his being—it follows that his moment of greatest power is that in which Love unlooses the doors of his Spirit and all his energies are in highest action; whence it happens that they who unitedly Will a thing during copulative union and its mutual ending possess the key to all possible Knowledge, mighty wand of White Magic—may defy disease, disaster, keep Death itself at bay, regain lost youth and wasted power, challenge permanent defeat, gain all good ends, reach the ultimate Spaces, commune with highest Seraphs, bathe in the crystal seas of God's Infinite Love and be in truth Sons and Daughters of the Ineffable Lord of glory![10]

But why sexual magic? What is the special appeal of this particular form of magical operation? Well, the logic behind it is really quite natural and self-evident; beyond its mere pleasure principle, sexual magic might be said to be the simplest, even *quintessential* form of "sympathetic magic." For if ordinary, natural, undirected sexual intercourse can give birth to a new living being—a fairly miraculous thing in itself—then it is not terribly difficult to imagine that ritualized, intentional, willfully directed intercourse might give birth to effects of a supernatural, magical, divine (or demonic) character. As Crowley put it, "the root idea is that any form of procreation other than normal is likely to produce results of a magical character."[11] As we will see, many practitioners of sexual magic would also turn to explicitly nonreproductive and—by the standards of their surrounding society—morally deviant and socially transgressive acts such as homosexual intercourse, masturbation, sadomasochism, and bestiality as the most powerful means to unleash a supernatural source of power. And as I hope to show, it is no accident that the rise of sexual magic in the West went hand in hand with the new search for sexual freedom, feminism, and gay rights, as well as the new forms of exploitation, pornography, and sexual commodification that have emerged since the late nineteenth century.

SEX MAGIC AND MODERNITY: POLITICAL LIBERATION OR COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION?

> [T]he science of the sexual magic is the key to the development and the underlying secret of all Masonic symbols. . . . [I]t is certain that the sexual question has become the most burning question of our time.
> THEODOR REUSS, "Mysteria Mystica Maxima"

> Sexuality is the center around which revolves the whole social life as well as the inner life of the individual.
> WILHELM REICH, *The Function of the Orgasm*

> Can we speak of a juncture between the erotic and political dimension?
> HERBERT MARCUSE, Political Preface 1966, in *Eros and Civilization*

Rather remarkably, although there is a vast body of popular, occult, and New Age literature on sexual magic, there is surprisingly little critical scholarship on the subject. Apart from the important work of John Patrick Deveney, Joscelyn Godwin, Alex Owen, and a few others, much of this literature has yet to be taken seriously by the academic study of religion. Most authors, including the most prominent scholars of Western esotericism, such as Antoine Faivre, have ignored this literature altogether.[12] The few who have dealt with it have typically dismissed it as, at best, "meaningless flim-flam" and, at worst, deviant perversion.[13] Moreover, there has been little attempt to place this literature in its larger social and political contexts, in relation to broader cultural forces in European and American history.

As I hope to show, the literature on sexual magic is neither a silly aberration of legitimate religious practice nor a superstitious throwback to a kind of premodern, prescientific form of thought. On the contrary, the literature on sexual magic that emerged from the mid-nineteenth century onward is *distinctly, even intensely "modern"* in form, and it expresses in an unusually acute way some of the most important themes that we typically associate with "modernity" in the West. While there are many ways of defining modernity, Jürgen Habermas suggests that it is essentially rooted in currents going back to the eighteenth century and the project of the Enlightenment. Among other things, this project was an attempt to develop an objective science, a universal morality and law with the goal of human emancipation and "liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion and superstition."[14] Above all, the project of modernity rested in a fundamental belief in the value of the individual self and the possibility of progress toward a free but well-ordered society. "Modernity is individualism, the effort of individuals to remake themselves and to remake society to allow design and free choice."[15]

As Paul Heelas and others have argued, many of the New Age and new religious movements that emerged in the last two hundred years do not represent so much a rejection of modernity; rather, they are often better described as powerful *affirmations* of certain basic modern ideals, such as progress, individualism, and free will, and thus represent a "celebration of the self and sacralization of modernity."[16] Or, as Hanegraaff suggests, the New Age represents a profound transformation of traditional forms of Western esotericism as refracted through the "mirror of secular thought"; that is to say, these older esoteric traditions have now been transformed in the context of modern science, technology, evolutionary theory, and psychology. At the same time, Hanegraaff also sees the rise of occultism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as largely an attempt to "re-enchant" an increasingly disenchanted, demystified, secularized modern industrial world, to rediscover the sense of mystery and magic in a society increasingly devoid of the sacred: "Occultism . . . is essentially an attempt to adapt esotericism to a disenchanted world: a world which no longer harbors a dimension of irreducible mystery . . . based upon an experience of the sacred as present in the daily world."[17]

Perhaps nowhere is this "modern" quality more apparent than in the literature on sexual magic. Following the lead of Georges Bataille, Foucault suggests that the modern obsession with sexuality is itself at least in part a response to the desacralization of the world and the "death of God" proclaimed by Nietzsche in the nineteenth century. In a world in which God is dead and the sacred is lost, sexuality—and above all transgressive forms of sexuality that overstep normal social boundaries—becomes one of the few places in which we can still discover an intense, liberating experience, beyond the limits of the finite self and the conventional social order:

> [T]he limit God had once provided could now be found in sexuality. Sexuality, especially since Sade, is demarcated by limits: the limit of consciousness in the face of unconscious desire; the limit of law in light of universal taboos. . . . These limits mean it is still one of the few areas "in a world which no longer recognizes any positive meaning in the sacred," where profanation and desecration can occur. . . . Sexuality and the death of God are thus intrinsically connected, tied together at the limits of human thought.[18]

The literature on sexual magic, I will argue, emerged in response to all of these forces associated with modernity and the seeming loss of the sacred in modern industrial society. Indeed, it is the most explicit attempt to rediscover the sacred in and through the most "profane" aspects of human life, sexuality itself—and in many cases, through specifically transgressive forms of sexual experience aimed at the deliberate overstepping of moral boundaries and social taboos.

This uniquely "modern" character of sexual magic has at least four important dimensions. First, like much of the discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the literature on sexual magic typically places supreme emphasis on the individual self and the power of the individual will as the ultimate creative force in the universe. In Crowley's words, "each individual is the centre of his own universe, his essential nature determining . . . his proper course of action;" thus the philosophy and practice of true magic "avows and justifies selfishness; it confirms the inmost conviction of each one of us that he is the centre of the cosmos."[19]

Second, like the new forms of *scientia sexualis* that emerged in the nineteenth century, the literature on sexual magic also identifies sex as the innermost secret or "hidden truth" of the self, the most powerful force in human nature, and the key to understanding the mysteries of human existence. As Randolph put it, the moment of orgasm is the most critical, most powerful moment in human life, when the soul is suddenly opened to both divine and demonic influences, and can therefore accomplish any worldly or otherworldly aim:

> The moment when a man discharges his seed—his essential self—into a . . . womb is the most solemn, energetic and powerful moment he can ever know on earth; if under the influence of mere lust it be done, the discharge is suicidal. . . . At the moment his seminal glands open, his nostrils expand, and while the seed is going from his soul to her womb he breathes one of two atmospheres, either fetid damnation from the border spaces or Divine Energy from heavens. Whatsoever he shall truly will and internally pray for when Love . . . is in the ascendant, that moment the prayer's response comes down.[20]

Third, the literature on sexual magic also reflects the modern emphasis on *science* as the most appropriate and effective means to uncover the hidden secrets of nature and the human self. As Crowley put it, in the epigraph cited above, sexual magic is in fact a "scientific secret," one that requires years of study and experiment, and one that when mastered, holds the ultimate technological power to produce anything the magus desires. Randolph, likewise, made frequent use of the language of science, electricity, and magnetism in order to explain and legitimate his methods of sexual magic, which operates by the same natural law of attraction between two contrary forces, positive and negative, that governs the entire universe. And he even called for the founding of a "SCHOOL OF SEXUAL SCIENCE . . . wherein people should be taught the mysteries of their own immortal being and . . . the laws that govern them!"[21]

Last and perhaps most important, the advocates of sexual magic were all in one way or another in search of radical *freedom* and an extreme, often utopian form of *liberation* on all levels—sexual, religious, and political alike. Already in 1876, Randolph announced "a religious, political, social, moral, emotional and philosophical upheaval, such as the modern world has never yet witnessed or even dreamed of";[22] and a key part of this was his teaching of sexual magic, which he saw as the "greatest hope for the regeneration of the world, the key to personal fulfillment as well as social transformation, and the basis of a nonrepressive civilization."[23] Crowley, too, saw sexual magic as a key part of his vision for a new era in human history—the age of Horus—governed by his new Law of Thelema, or "do what thou wilt."[24] Not surprisingly, the contemporary popular and New Age literature on the subject has taken this call for sexual-political liberation to even more radical extremes. As one recent female author named "Tara" enthusiastically proclaims in her "Sex Magick: The Key to Personal Liberation," this is the key to liberation from the oppression of all outdated social norms and the means to absolute spiritual freedom: "Why sex magick? One word expresses it: liberation." For "the ecstasy of sustained continuous orgasm is the vehicle of freedom for both men and women."[25] Some recent authors have even proclaimed sexual magic an "engine of political change" whose liberating effect can help create a "new spiritual democracy."[26]

In short, the rise of *magia sexualis* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is by no means some eccentric regression to a premodern worldview, but on the contrary, the very *epitome* of some of the central problems, questions, and anxieties that characterize Western "modernity" itself. Finally, as we will see in the final chapters of this book, it also embodies many of the central debates and controversies surrounding "postmodernism" and postindustrial, late capitalist culture at the dawn of the new millennium. Indeed, with its unique fusion of sexuality and spirituality, magic and science, hedonism and religious discipline, sexual magic embodies some of the most acute "cultural contradictions" that pervade late capitalist, postmodern culture itself.[27]

In my analysis of the rise of *magia sexualis,* I will adapt but also critique some of the insights of Foucault and others who have examined the role of sexuality and science in the nineteenth century. Following Foucault, I would suggest that the new interest in sexual magic was closely tied to the rise of new sciences of sexuality in America and Europe, which were in turn tied to the spread of "bio-power," or the attempt to regulate society through the increased knowledge of (and power over) sexual reproduction. Above all, it reflects the new interest in "deviant" and "nonreproductive" forms of sexuality, such as homosexuality, masturbation, bestiality, and other nonnormative sexual practices that run counter to an efficient, productive, capitalist society.[28]

As Foucault points out, the category of sexuality is itself a fairly recent invention, a product of the late nineteenth century;[29] and it is one that is by no means fixed or static, but has been newly imagined in the changing social and political contexts of the last hundred years. It is a common misconception, Foucault argues, to suppose that the history of sex in the West has been a narrative of progressive liberation from Victorian repression and prudery. On the contrary, the Victorian age witnessed not so much a repression but instead an intense proliferation of discourse about sex, which was then categorized, theorized, and medically classified in endless detail.

> The society that emerged in the nineteenth century—the bourgeois capitalist or industrial society . . . —did not confront sex with a fundamental refusal of recognition. On the contrary, it put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it. Not only did it speak of sex and compel everyone to do so; it also set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex. As if it suspected sex of harboring a fundamental secret. [30]

Conversely, our own age is perhaps not the age of sexual revolution that it is commonly imagined to be. Our sexual revolutions have been accompanied by new forms of regulation, as well as new forms of backlash and conservatism. What *has* happened, however, is that we have produced an incredible body of discourse about sex—a kind of "over-knowledge" or "hyper-development of discourse about sexuality, science of sexuality and knowledge of sexuality," which now saturates our world as an endless source of titillation.[31] As Angus McLaren comments, "Today's media, while claiming to be shocked by the subversiveness of carnal desires, deluge the public with explicit sexual imagery to sell everything from Calvin Klein jeans to Black and Decker power drills. Sexuality . . . has invaded every aspect of public life. Sexual identity has become a key defining category in the twentieth century."[32]

Particularly in the wake of Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, and their disciples, sexuality has more and more come to define the very essence of human nature. As Dennis Altman observes, "One of the dominant themes in post-Freudian western thinking about sex has been to explain why sexuality is so central to our sense of self, and thus the basis of both psychological and political identity."[33] Above all for Reich—who would have a profound impact on later magical and neo-pagan traditions—the liberation of sex is intimately tied to personal, social, and political liberation as well: "The orgasm formula thus emerges as the life formula itself. . . . [T]he sexual process is the productive biological process per se, in procreation, work, joyful living, intellectual productivity, etc."[34] Therefore, Reich concludes, all spiritual, psychological, and political freedom depends on the freedom of the sexual instinct. This connection between sexual liberation and political liberation has been a recurring theme since the nineteenth century, continuing in the work of Reich and Marcuse and culminating in the cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s: "The idea of sexual liberation as integral to larger social and political liberation was an underlying theme in radical and romantic theories since the early nineteenth century and became central to both the counterculture and New Left movements of the 1970s."[35]

The rise of interest in sexual magic, I will suggest, opens an important window onto the shifting attitudes toward sexuality in this complex era. Indeed, it is perhaps a kind of *magnifying glass* precisely because it highlights the most controversial issues and debates surrounding male and female relations, as well as the seemingly awesome, dangerous power of sex as a social and religious force. Authors like Randolph, Crowley, and their disciples would take the modern emphasis on sex as the defining element in human nature to its furthest extreme; sex now becomes not only the most powerful force in life and *the secret* of human nature but also the most intense source of spiritual power and the key to superhuman abilities.

However, while I find Foucault's work on sexuality and power generally useful, I also find it problematic and limited in several respects. First, as a variety of feminist critics have observed, Foucault's work is on the whole surprisingly androcentric and generally fails to take account of the profound differences between the constructions of male and female sexuality. As Grace Jantzen observes, Foucault is often "gender-blind" and fails to see "the extent to which the structures of power and knowledge have operated unequally upon women and men." For in the analysis of any major concept—whether it is sexuality or religion or mysticism—it is critical that we be aware of the inevitable "ways in which gender and power are interlocked."[36] As we will see in this book, the rise of sexual magic was from its origins intimately bound up with the politics of gender—though in very different ways in different historical periods. Some early authors like Randolph were advocates of women's rights and so also insisted on the importance of mutual orgasm in sexual rituals. Others, like Crowley, however, were quite androcentric, arguably even exploitative of women, whose bodies were largely used as instruments in esoteric ritual. And finally, with the rise of neo-pagan witchcraft in the middle of the twentieth century, sexual magic has been increasingly tied to the feminist, gay, and lesbian movements that have emerged since the 1960s and 1970s.

The second and perhaps more troubling problem with Foucault's work is that it ultimately tends toward a one-sided, pessimistic, and often quite depressing view of power. Particularly in his later work on the history of sexuality, Foucault did insist that power is always inextricably intertwined with resistance, that power and resistance are actually mutually dependent. Nonetheless, as Lois McNay and others have argued, Foucault generally has much more to say about the omnipresence of power and domination than he does about the possibilities for resistance: "Foucault's theory of power is hampered by a persistent dilemma, namely, the tendency to . . . a view in which power relations are overly negative and dominatory. The result is a reified view of the social totality. . . . The dialectic of the social and the individual . . . remains frozen and top heavy, obviating theories of agency and change."[37] In Foucault's analysis, power seems to spread in an inescapable web through all social institutions, through church, government, schools, factories, asylums, and prisons, forming a pervasive network of disciplinary practices that works above all through the regulation of the body and sexuality. Thus, we are left wondering, "What is to be done in the face of this spreading web of power?"[38] As Jana Sawicki argues, we therefore need "to flesh out Foucault's underdeveloped remarks on resistance and struggle to show how discourse can be used to support liberatory political struggles . . . for sexual freedom."[39] For in itself, sexuality is "neither wholly a source of domination nor of resistance," but rather "an arena of struggle. There are no inherently liberatory or repressive sexual practices. Any practice is cooptable and capable of becoming a source of resistance." In sum, we also need to look at the ways in which sexuality can not only be inscribed by the dominant institutions, but also be manipulated by "the marginal and submerged voices," "the mad, delinquent, disempowered," and, perhaps above all, by women.[40]

Building upon but going beyond Foucault's insights, I will argue that the literature on sexual magic opens some important new insights onto the role of sexuality and resistance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, with its emphasis on the awesome power and dangerous potential of sexuality, sexual magic opens a critical window onto the shifting attitudes toward sex, power, and freedom in this complex period. The early work of P. B. Randolph, for example, reflects a growing interest among American men and women of the late nineteenth century in the role of mutually satisfying heterosexual intercourse as the key to happiness on all levels, not just to spiritual well-being and material prosperity, but also to the birth of a new social order free of sexual, racial, or political oppression.[41] However, Randolph was also careful to insist that sexual magic should take place only between married heterosexual couples, warning of the terrible dangers of intercourse undertaken with ill intentions. Conversely, the later work of Crowley and his followers centered around sex in its most deviant, nonproductive forms as a profound source of esoteric power. For Crowley, deviant acts such as homosexual intercourse and masturbation would become the means to unleash the most awesome magical potency. Borrowing some insights from Georges Bataille,[42] I will suggest that Crowley found in sexual magic the most intense experience of *transgression,* the overstepping of conventional taboos, as a means to unleash an ecstatic, liberating power and thereby herald the dawn of a whole new era in human history.

But despite their differences of opinion, I will argue, *all of these authors explicitly linked the liberation of sexuality with an ideal of social and political liberation.* Randolph, for example, was not only a proponent of "affectional alchemy" but also a powerful spokesman for abolition and a vocal feminist. Crowley and his disciples would take this ideal of social and political liberation much further, by declaring the dawn of a whole new era in human history and the birth of a new world order based on the Law of Thelema: "Do what thou wilt."[43] With the rise of neo-paganism and modern witchcraft, we see sexual magic increasingly fused with a powerful feminist agenda, an environmentalist reaction against industrial capitalism, and a severe critique of the entire white male establishment.[44] And finally, with the birth of even more extreme movements like Satanism and "Chaos Magic," we see a kind of postmodern deconstruction of all fixed ideologies and an urge toward constant revolution and transformation.[45]

It would, however, be a mistake to romanticize this magical tradition purely as a noble force of resistance fighting against a repressive patriarchal regime. On the contrary, I will argue that throughout all of these sexual-magical traditions, there is a *profound tension* between the ideal of social or political liberation and the ever-present reality of the exploitation of sexual desire. As Dennis Altman points out, one of the sobering lessons learned from the naive enthusiasm of the sexual revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s was the "extent to which sexual 'liberation' could be co-opted by commercial consumerism. As mainstream publishers produce glossy erotica and sex toys are sold in mail-order sex emporiums, the hope that freedom from sexual restraints will lead to revolutionary change seems increasingly utopian."[46] Even Randolph and his disciples were well aware of this danger,[47] and many of Crowley's critics would accuse him of manipulating his many male and female disciples to satiate his own selfish desires.[48] Surely, if we browse the shelves of any popular bookstore or any number of Internet Web sites today, there is ample evidence that sex magic and Tantra have been increasingly mass-marketed to an audience of spiritual consumers. Indeed, one might well argue that sexual magic—with its explicit fusion of this-worldly sensual pleasure and otherworldly bliss—is perhaps an ideal form of spirituality for our own unique socioeconomic situation of late capitalism at the turn of the millennium.[49]

Thus I will argue that the literature on sexual magic has from its origins been plagued by a *deep tension and ambivalence:* the tension between liberation and exploitation, between freedom from the repressive bonds of the past and co-option by the consuming forces of a new age.

METHOD, THEORY, AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK: A CRITICAL CULTURAL HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

> Of Sex, indeed of everything.
>
> AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE, *The Book of Pleasure*

> [H]istorians share an uncommon faith in the revelatory power of a telling detail, a small item which opens up a complex whole, and which, thereby entails a larger set of intellectual consequences. . . . [H]istorians . . . play the role of "anthropologists" in Aristotle's sense of the term: people who delight in telling tales (logoi) about other folk (anthropoi), in a word, gossip.
>
> JONATHAN Z. SMITH, *When the Chips Are Down*

Some readers might be inclined to dismiss this project as a kind of bad popularization of a sexy topic aimed more at titillating a consumer audience than at engaging serious intellectual issues. In response to this anticipated criticism, I would argue that the academic study of religion has from its origins been pervaded by a kind of elitism and a rejection of popular culture, which has generally hampered rather than aided its development as a discipline. In this respect, as in many others, the academic study of religion has tended to lag several decades behind the rest of the academy. Most other disciplines, such as comparative literature, art history, anthropology, and sociology, have long taken popular cultural forms very seriously as objects of study, and they have developed sophisticated theoretical tools for understanding the complex interrelations between popular cultural forms and larger social, political, and economic forces. Yet students of religion have only recently begun to turn their attention to the incredible variety of popular religious experience and to recognize that they might actually offer a remarkable kind of mirror—even if a rather warped, distorted funhouse mirror—onto the most central questions and anxieties of our culture as a whole.[50] Conversely, as Fredric Jameson has observed, scholars of cultural studies have for their part often failed to take serious account of religion—which is, in fact, "a very large and basic component of American mass culture" that has been "decidedly underanalyzed and underrepresented in the field of cultural studies."[51]

My inquiry into sexual magic is therefore an attempt to look critically at a popular religious form as it emerged within a series of specific historical, social, and political contexts. Following authors like Bruce Lincoln, I approach this very much as a *historian* of religions in the strong sense of the term; that is, I want to look critically at the transformations of particular religious ideas in changing historical contexts, as shaped by and responding to specific social interests and political forces. "To practice history of religions," in Lincoln's sense, "is to insist on the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human and material dimensions of those discourses . . . that represent themselves as eternal, transcendent, spiritual and divine."[52] And following Jonathan Z. Smith, I hope to scrutinize this one particularly fascinating historical "detail" in order to open up much larger issues in the comparative study of religion.

At the same time, however, this project is also an explicitly *self-reflexive and self-critical one,* an analysis not just of particular religious phenomena, but also of *our own contemporary preoccupation with sexuality and liberation in late capitalist consumer society today.* As various scholars have pointed out, the new emphasis on "reading sex" and the study of body in modern Western academia are at least in part a result of (or a reaction to) the intense emphasis on the body and sexuality in contemporary consumer culture as a whole. As Bryan S. Turner observes, the preoccupation with sex and the body in the contemporary academy stems in large part from "the emphasis on pleasure, desire, difference and playfulness which are features of contemporary capitalism."[53] Other authors make the point even more strongly. As Jean Starobinski suggests, "the present infatuation with the different modes of body consciousness is a symptom of the considerable narcissistic component characteristic of contemporary Western culture."[54] Hence, in my discussion of sexual magic, I will also be continually interrogating my own interests in this material, asking the question of just why it is that I and others in contemporary America are so fascinated by the seemingly magical and liberating powers of sex. If we are to move beyond the simplistic views of sexual magic as either "nookie nirvana" or some kind of radical social liberation, it is all the more imperative that we remain "relentlessly self-conscious" of our own academic, personal, and political interests in this material.

As such, this book is in many ways a logical extension of my previous work on Indian Tantric traditions and their transmission to the West.[55] In my second book, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power,* I traced the genealogy of Tantra as it emerged through the dialectical interplay between Western and Indian imaginations over the last several hundred years. In the course of its transmission to the west, Tantra was progressively transformed from a highly esoteric tradition concerned with the acquisition of power into a widely popularized phenomena concerned primarily with sex, physical pleasure, and liberated openness. In this book, I will look at the other side of the story, by examining the rise of sexual magic in the Western world since the late nineteenth century. Although its origins seem to be rooted in older Western esoteric traditions that are independent of Indian influence, the practice of *magia sexualis* in the West was soon combined and perhaps hopelessly confused with the newly imported Tantric traditions from the "exotic Orient." Hence this book will build on my previous work by retracing the complex meldings, cross-fertilizations, and often gross misunderstandings at work between East and West in an age of increasing globalization and transnational exchange of religious ideas.

The structure and outline of the book will proceed along the lines of a critical history or genealogy, in Foucault's sense of the term. That is to say, I will not attempt to present a smooth, tidy, or coherent historical narrative that leads logically from an imagined past to a triumphant present. Instead, I will begin from our own present situation—namely, the preoccupation with sexuality, transgression, and liberation in American consumer culture at the turn of the millennium—and attempt to work backward, genealogically, in order to retrace the complex series of "accidents, the minute deviations—or the complete reversals—the errors . . . and the faulty calculations" that have given birth to sexual magic and sexual obsessions today.[56]

Thus, chapter 1, "The Recurring Nightmare, the Elusive Secret," will provide a brief overview of the background of sexual magic in the West, both in its imaginary forms and in its more concrete historical roots. Since at least the time of the Gnostic heresies, there has been a recurring fear throughout Western history that links illicit sexuality with black magic and social subversion. This dark fear recurs in the late medieval heresies (which were typically accused of all manner of sexual deviance), the Order of the Templars (who were accused of sodomy and devil worship), and of course the witch hunts of the late Middle Ages (which reflect the deep associations between magic, sex, and social subversion in the Western imagination). After tracing its imaginary origins, however, I will also discuss the more credible historical roots of modern sexual magic in ancient Greek love magic, the sexual symbolism of the Jewish Kabbalah and Renaissance magic, and the erotic mysticism of Emanuel Swedenborg. While none of these involved any explicit use of sexual intercourse as a magical technique, they did contain speculation about the mysteries of love, conception, and erotic attraction that would provide the intellectual basis for modern sexual magic.

Each of the seven subsequent chapters will then focus on one particular historical moment and one particular figure who played a key role in the development of sexual magic in the modern era. For the sake of this relatively brief history, I will focus primarily on the following characters: P. B. Randolph, Theodor Reuss, Aleister Crowley, Julius Evola, Gerald Gardner (and later feminist witches), Anton Szandor LaVey, Austin Osman Spare, and Peter J. Carroll. I have chosen these figures because they represent the most influential current of sexual magic in the modern West, whose genealogy can be clearly traced from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Sadly, I will not in this book be able to deal with a wide array of other, peripheral though no less interesting figures, such as Russian-born occultist Maria de Naglowska (about whom much could be said[57]), Franz Bardon, or the "crazy-wisdom" shock-guru, G. I. Gurdjieff.

In chapter 2, "Sex Power Is God Power," I will look at the first known example of a truly sophisticated and well-documented system of sexual magic, the work of Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–75). The son of a black slave and a wealthy Virginian father, Randolph was one of the most famous spiritualists of his day who also developed a complex and extremely influential method of sexual magic. In my discussion of Randolph, I will place him in the context of nineteenth-century debates surrounding sex, women, and marriage, suggesting that he was at once a reflection of the sexual attitudes of his time and yet also a fairly radical visionary with ideals of both gender and racial equality. Randolph's teachings would soon be transmitted throughout England and Europe through a variety of esoteric orders, giving birth to a wide range of sexual magic in movements such as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and their offshoots.

Chapter 3, "The Yoga of Sex," will then examine the impact of Indian traditions such as Hindu and Buddhist Tantra and the *Kama Sutra,* which began to penetrate England, the United States, and Europe by the mid-nineteenth century. For most early Western scholars, Tantra was typically singled out as the most bizarre, degenerate, and extreme aspect of the exotic Orient itself, and that aspect of the "Indian mind" most clearly opposed to the rational, progressive mind of modern Europe.[58] Yet remarkably, not long after its transmission to the West, Tantra would also be embraced by many British and American readers who saw in it a powerful source of sexual and social liberation. In England, figures like Sir Richard Burton—the first translator of the *Kama Sutra* —and Edward Sellon—the notorious pornographic novelist—became increasingly fascinated by the religions of India, which they saw as an exotic, erotic alternative to Victorian Christian society. However, the first attempt to fuse Western sexual magic with Indian Tantra begins with the highly esoteric group known as the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO). Founded by Theodor Reuss (1855–1923) in the early twentieth century, the OTO claimed to possess the ultimate secret of all esoteric traditions—namely, the secret of sexual magic—which was in turn identified with the sexual rites of Hindu Tantra. Even more clearly than Randolph, Reuss linked sexual magic with an ideal of social transformation and liberation from an oppressive Christian world. Since Reuss's time, most sexual magic in the West has been increasingly fused with a somewhat deformed version of Indian Tantra.

In chapter 4, "The Beast with Two Backs," I will then examine the unique melding of Western sexual magic and Indian Tantric traditions at the dawn of the twentieth century, particularly in the work of the "Great Beast," Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). Perhaps the single greatest exponent of sexual magic in modern times, Crowley would take the fusion of East and West still further, by making sex the supreme magical secret and the ultimate source of power. In my discussion of Crowley, I will place him in light of the debates surrounding sexuality and, above all, "deviant" sexual behavior such as masturbation and homosexuality in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through explicit acts of transgression, homoerotic intercourse, and masturbation, Crowley sought a radical form of liberation on all levels—sexual, social, and political alike. Ultimately, by transgressing the limits of the old dying world of Christian Europe, he believed that he was the prophet of a new era in human history based on the supreme power of the individual will. As such, I will argue that Crowley is a remarkably Janus-faced figure, a kind of beast with two backs, turned both forward and backward. For he reflects some of the central sexual and cultural issues of the early twentieth century, even as he foreshadows the crisis of modernity after the Second World War and many trends in recent postmodern thought as well.

Chapter 5, "The Yoga of Power," will then examine the appropriation of both Tantra and sexual magic by the more extreme right-wing intellectuals of the twentieth century, and specifically, by Italian fascist Julius Evola (1898–1974). Like many intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, Evola was profoundly disillusioned by the apparent secularism and materialism of the modern Western world and made a powerful call to return to the "Traditional" aristocratic and spiritual values of pre-Christian Europe. In so doing, he would become not only one of the most influential fascist thinkers of the twentieth century, but also one of the most influential scholars of Western esotericism and Indian Tantra. Above all, Evola saw in Tantra and sexual magic the means to recover the powerful, virile, and heroic nature of "Traditional Man," which he believed had been emasculated by the effete culture of modern Christian Europe.

In chapter 6, "The Goddess and the Great Rite," I will discuss the revival of modern magic and neo-paganism that began in England in the mid-twentieth century. Specifically, I will focus on the most important figure in the Wiccan revival, Gerald Gardner (1884–1964), who claimed to have been initiated into a witch cult in the 1930s and then went on to inspire a whole new generation of witchcraft in the second half of the twentieth century. Much of Gardner's witch practice centered around the power of sex and its liberation, using rituals such as the "Great Rite," a form of sacramental sexual intercourse in which the naked man and woman embody the divine male and female principles. At the same time, one of the most important aspects of the neo-pagan revival has been its ties not just to sexual liberation but also to feminism and women's liberation, which has been a central aspect of the movement since the 1960s and 1970s. As I will argue, however, the role of feminism in neo-paganism has from its origins been profoundly ambivalent and problematic. For while neo-paganism offers new roles of authority, power, and status for women as ritual experts, it also typically reinscribes women into highly stereotyped gender roles: thus, the female is most often redescribed in "naturalized" terms as the Great Mother, tied to the cycles of nature, the moon, the body, sexuality, and reproduction. This naive essentialism would only seem to undermine and impede any more critical feminist agenda.

Chapter 7, "The Age of Satan," will examine the rise of modern Satanism and the transformation of the Satanic fantasy of the Black Mass from a terrifying Christian nightmare into a practical reality beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Here I will focus primarily on the colorful figure of Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–97), the infamous carnival organist, lion tamer, and founder of the Church of Satan. Deeply influenced by Crowley, but going even further toward the goal of absolute liberation, LaVey called for the rejection of all religious fictions and the complete affirmation of the individual human self. Here Satan is no longer the enemy or sinister inversion of God, but merely the symbol of the human being finally liberated from all external deities or religious institutions. An important part of this liberation of the human individual, in turn, is the liberation of sensuality in all its forms, in accordance with the first of the Nine Satanic Statements: "Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence." Indeed, according to LaVey, the "Satanic Age" began in 1966, at the very same time that "the Sexual Freedom League came into prominence and the hippies developed the free sex culture."[59] In my discussion of Satanism, I will also place the movement in light of the debates surrounding sex and the countercultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. LaVey, I will argue, reflects both the larger preoccupation with sexual liberation during this period and the tendency of sexual liberation to be coopted by the forces of consumerism and commercialization. By the time of his death, LaVey's church had splintered into a number of rival Satanic factions, many of whom believed that the movement had been sold out and transformed into a cheesy business marketed to racists and fascists.

In chapter 8, "Sexual Chaos," I will then explore the proliferation of a whole new array of sexual magic at the turn of the third millennium. Among the most powerful expressions of this new breed of *magia sexualis* is the wildly eclectic practice known as "Chaos Magic," espoused by "psychological anarchists" like Peter J. Carroll (b. 1952). An explicitly syncretic and iconoclastic approach, Chaos Magic draws freely on any and all practices that seem useful, while at the same time rejecting any absolute claims to truth and regarding all beliefs as so many relative illusions. With its basic maxim "nothing is true; everything is permitted," Chaos Magic uses sexual magic as one of many ways to shatter fixed ways of thinking and unleash the power of Chaos as radical freedom from all social, religious, or institutional structures. Not surprisingly, Chaos Magic and other forms of neo-paganism have found a welcome home in the rapidly growing world of the Internet, which lends itself naturally to this kind of decentered, eclectic, and shifting network perspective. Indeed, Chaos Magic might be regarded as the first truly "postmodern" and "deconstructionist" form of spirituality. Yet ironically, with its emphasis on intense sensual experience, constant transformation, and liberation from all fixed institutions, Chaos Magic seems uniquely suited to our own increasingly decentralized, shifting, and fluid capitalist economy—the situation that has been variously dubbed "late capitalism" or "disorganized capitalism."[60] Playing upon Jameson's phrase, we might even say that these radically deconstructionist, fluid, and shifting new trends perhaps embody the "magical logic of late capitalism."

Finally, in the conclusion, "The Lessons of King Lamus," I will discuss the broader implications of modern sexual magic both for religious studies and for our understanding of sexuality in contemporary culture as a whole. With their emphasis on the awesome power and potential dangers of sexuality, these advocates of sexual magic give us a telling insight into the larger desires, fears, and contradictions surrounding sexuality in Western society over the last two hundred years. Indeed, they express both the hope of liberation through sexual freedom and the ever-present danger of the commodification of desire in the late capitalist world.[61] Perhaps most important, they raise many difficult questions about the relationship between sexuality and religion today, in the aftermath of our various cultural and sexual revolutions. As Foucault argues, it may not be the case that we in the modern West have liberated sex in any radical way, but what we *have* done is to intensify our discourse about sex, arguing and fantasizing about it as an endless source of titillation. At the same time, we have also taken sex to the furthest possible extremes—to extremes of transgression and excess, not resting until we have violated every taboo: "The twentieth century will undoubtedly have discovered the related categories of exhaustion, excess, the limit and transgression."[62] To use the phrase of Jean Baudrillard, we are now perhaps living in a kind of "post-orgy" society, after all the great social and sexual revolutions have taken place."[1] Yet this has left us in a strange "undefined state," questioning our very identity. We are left asking ourselves, as Aleister Crowley seems to have asked himself in the last years of his life, after he had exhausted every sexual desire and sunk into heroin addiction: What is there left to do after every forbidden desire has been indulged and every taboo has been transgressed?

1 The Recurring Nightmare, the Elusive Secret

Historical and Imaginary Roots of Sex Magic in the Western Tradition

> The whole power of Magic is founded on Eros. The way Magic works is to bring things together through their inherent similarity.
> MARSILIO FICINO, *De Amore*

> Love is one of the great instruments of magical power, but it is categorically forbidden to the Magus, at least as an invocation or passion. Woe to the Samson of Kabbalah if he permits himself to be put asleep by Delilah! . . . Sexual love is ever an illusion, for it is the result of an imaginary mirage.
> ELIPHAS LÉVI, *Transcendental Magic*

Sex, magic, and secrecy have long been intimately associated in the Western imagination. Since at least the first centuries of the Christian church, sexual licentiousness was often believed to go hand in hand with experimentation in occult arts and secret rituals. Conversely, heretical religious groups were typically accused of the most perverse sexual activities. One of the most common charges leveled against the Gnostics by the early church fathers was that of hedonism and sexual abandon in the course of their obscene rites, and this accusation of sexual license and obscene ritual would recur throughout the later Middle Ages in the church's war against various other heresies, from the Cathars in the thirteenth century to the Knights Templar in the fourteenth century to the witch trials in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. As Robert Lerner observes, "heretics of all stripes were simply assumed to be immoralists."[1] Repeatedly and with remarkable consistency, a narrative emerged that linked sexual intercourse with dangerous power, and in turn linked sexual transgression with occult ritual and obscene inversion of religious practice. Even the most renowned exponents of magic, such as the nineteenth-century occultist Eliphas Lévi, quoted above, warned of the awesome power and terrible danger bound up with sexual intercourse. As David Frankfurter observes, the fear of this unholy union of sexual license and black magic is one of the most persistent fantasies in the Western imagination over the last two thousand years.[2]

But how much of this association of sexuality with magic has any real historical basis, and how much is pure fiction or simply Western society's own "fantasies of the world turned upside down"?[3] Was there ever any widespread practice of sexual magic prior to the nineteenth century, or is the very concept of sexual magic simply a modern attempt to enact a recurring fantasy that has tantalized the Western imagination for two millennia?

The association of sex and magic is by no means a new idea in the modern comparative study of religion. Early anthropologists and historians of religions from Sir James George Frazer to Mircea Eliade compiled masses of data about various fertility cults across the globe that were believed to link sexual license and orgiastic behavior with fertility rites and agricultural ceremonies. Thus, Eliade sees the orgy as a basic and widespread form of "magico-religious" ritual aimed both to enhance the fertility of crops and to restore humankind to the primordial, unformed chaos from which all life proceeds: "The orgy sets flowing the sacred energy of life."[4]

> [R]itual orgies . . . are attested among populations as different as the Kurds, the Tibetans, the Eskimos, the Malgaches, the Ngadju Dyaks, and the Australians. The incentives are manifold, but generally such ritual orgies are carried out in order to avert a cosmic or social crisis . . . or in order to lend magico-religious support . . . by releasing and heightening the dormant powers of sexuality. . . . [I]ndiscriminate and excessive sexual intercourse plunges the collectivity into the fabulous epoch of the beginnings.[5]

Other historians, such as Narendranath Bhattacharyya, have even argued that there is an archaic matriarchal substratum beneath all the religions of India, the Middle East, and most of the ancient world which is rooted in a form of sexual magic. Above all, Bhattacharyya suggests, the ancient goddess cults of Cybele, Isis, Ashtarte, and the Indian mother goddesses are rooted in "primitive sex rites based on the magical association of natural and human fertility."[6]

Not surprisingly, contemporary popular authors have taken this argument still further, by arguing that sex magic is in fact one of the oldest, most universal of all forms of human spirituality. "Sex magic is as old as mankind," writes popular sex magician Don Webb.[7] Another neo-Tantric guru, Nik Douglas, argues that sex magic and Tantra can be traced back to the Paleolithic era, when spiritual sex emerged as the original "Mother of Spiritual Belief" for all later civilization. "It was during the Paleolithic era of the Ice Age that the foundations of magic and mysticism were established, with sex as the cornerstone. In this era, sex was undoubtedly a spiritual mystery."[8] This idea is really the starting point for Dan Brown's novel *The DaVinci Code,* which imagines an ancient tradition of matriarchy, goddess-worship, and sexual ritual at the basis of early Christianity itself, which was later pushed underground by the Catholic Church.

While there is not a great deal of evidence to discredit these theories of a widespread archaic substratum of goddess worship and sexual magic, there is not much to support them either. Indeed, we ought to be extremely suspicious of all such sweeping, largely ahistorical claims, which typically tell us far more about the personal, social, and political agendas of the scholars who make them than they do about other cultures or actual historical events.[9] What we must do instead, I think, is look critically at the data we have available to us today and interrogate both the more fantastic and the more credible narratives surrounding magic and sexuality, taking both seriously as key components in the modern imagining of *magia sexualis.*

In this chapter, I will examine both the imaginary and the historical roots of sexual magic in the West. As Norman Cohn has argued, there does seem to be a recurring fantasy of black magic and illicit sexuality that runs throughout much of Western history, from the early Christian church to the time of the witch hunts. This is the story of what Cohn calls "Europe's inner demons," or the projection of Christian Europe's own violent drives and desires onto marginalized groups such as heretics and witches. The resulting fantasy of sex and black magic is thus a kind of "return of the repressed," the return of Christianity's own denial of the body, nature, and sexuality in a monstrously distorted form.[10] As Charles Zika has recently suggested, however, these fantasies of magic and transgression were never *simply* a matter of repressive denial. Rather, they were also ways for medieval Europeans to explore, give expression to, and even enjoy transgressive desires: "repression is also about exploring the pleasures of desire, of seduction, of the body: the history of discipline is also a history of excess."[11]

To borrow a phrase from Michael Taussig, we might say that this narrative is a form of *mimesis,* or a projection of deep-seated fantasies and desires onto certain social or political "others." As Taussig suggests, mimesis is particularly at work during struggles for power between dominant and oppressed groups—for example, between colonial authorities and native peoples, between whites and blacks, or between the Nazis and Jews: "Racism is the parade ground, where the civilized rehearse this love-hate relation with their repressed sensuosity, with the nose of the Jew, their 'instinct for avarice,' the blackness of the negro, their alleged sexuality."[12] Yet ironically, even as they condemn marginal groups as savage or irrational, the dominant factions often mimic that same savagery in their oppression of those groups: "The magic of mimesis lies in the transformation wrought on reality by rendering its image. . . . [S]uch mimesis occurs by a mirroring of otherness that reflects back the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savagery they yearn to colonize."[13] Very often, this mimetic projection centers specifically around sex—the intense sexual power, at once frightening and tantalizing, so frequently attributed to primitives and other races.[14] It is precisely this sort of mimetic projection of sexual immorality and dangerous power that we see repeated throughout Western religious history. In the persecutions of the Gnostics, the Cathars, and the witches, we see many of the same repressed sexual fantasies and desires projected through the "magic of mimesis" onto a series of marginalized others.

Yet at the same time, this association between sex and magic was not *entirely* a projection or displaced fantasy. Rather, I will argue, there is a deep current running through Western esotericism that does connect the powers of sex and magic and would so form the foundation for modern sexual magic. From ancient Greek love magic, through early Gnosticism and Hermeticism, to Jewish Kabbalah and Renaissance magic, there is a very old esoteric tradition that has linked the mysteries of sexual love with those of magical ritual. The modern practice of sex magic that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I will argue, is in large part a complex fusion of these imaginary and historical traditions, weaving together both the fantasies of transgressive sexual rites and the actual practice of erotic magic in the Western esoteric tradition.

FANTASIES OF THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN: SEXUAL LICENSE AND RELIGIOUS PERVERSION IN THE WESTERN IMAGINATION

> The famous gesture of Adam covering his genitals with a fig leaf is, according to Augustine, not due to the simple fact that Adam was ashamed of their presence, but to the fact that his sexual organs were moving by themselves without his consent. Sex in creation is the image of man revolted against God. . . . His uncontrolled sex is exactly the same as what he himself has been toward God—a rebel.
>
> MICHEL FOUCAULT

> [T]hough it truly shames me for the disgraceful things they did . . . nevertheless I shall not recoil from saying what they did not recoil from doing, so as to arouse in my readers a shuddering horror of their scandalous behavior.
>
> After copulating, as if the crime of their whoredom were not enough, they offer up their shame to heaven.
>
> EPIPHANIUS, *Panarion,* describing the Phibionite Gnostic sect

Much of the inspiration for the rise of sexual magic in the nineteenth century is clearly drawn from imaginary sources. That is to say, it drew upon a long tradition of fantastic narratives about wild orgies, bizarre ritual, and obscene occultism that had little basis in reality but a lasting impact on the popular imagination for millennia. To cite but a few examples: when Aleister Crowley created his "Gnostic Mass" for the Ordo Templi Orientis—which centered around the male priest "piercing" the priestess with his "sacred lance"—he was in fact mimicking the fantastic and largely groundless accusations of sexual license that were commonly aimed at the Gnostics by the early church. He was not, in other words, re-creating an actual ritual, but enacting the dark fantasy of an inverted Eucharist that obsessed and terrified the early Christian church. Likewise, when Gerald Gardner introduced his "Great Rite" for modern witches—a rite that involved intercourse between male and female partners—he was not following any ancient or traditional ritual. Rather, he was mimicking the stereotype of witchcraft and sex that had lingered in the Western imagination for at least a thousand years. And perhaps most obviously, the modern "Black Mass" performed by the Church of Satan—celebrated on the body of a naked woman—is clearly a mockery of the dark fantasy of a Satanic Mass that has haunted the Christian imagination for centuries.

The origins of these fantastic narratives of orgiastic ritual and black magic are doubtless very old and probably predate the rise of Christianity. We can already see the seeds of this narrative in the descriptions of some of the Greek and Roman mystery religions, and above all, the cult of Bacchus/Dionysus. Although little is known about the actual content of the Dionysian mysteries—which were as diverse and varied as the many myths surrounding the god himself—they do seem to have centered at least in part around phallic worship, intoxication, and ritual excess.[15] But whatever their actual content, the Dionysian mysteries would soon become closely associated with sexual license, extreme violence, and often criminal activity in the Greek and Roman imaginations. Already by the fifth century BCE, as we see in Euripides' classic tragedy *The Bacchae,* the cult of Dionysus had become widely associated with orgiastic ritual, hedonism, and violence. Here Dionysus appears in Thebes in order to revive his cultic worship, which had fallen into ill repute. To do so, he maddens the women of the area, who are driven out into the forest where they dance wildly, wear skins of beasts, suckle wolves, and engage in the ripping apart (*sporagmos*) and consumption (*omophagia*) of the raw flesh of their animal victims.

> I have sung them with frenzy, hounded them from home,
> up to the mountain where they wander, crazed of mind,
> and compelled to wear my orgies' livery
> Every woman in Thebes—but the women only—
> I drove from home, mad. . . . [16]

In the end, King Pentheus himself—the hard-hearted ruler of Thebes, who had denied Dionysus—becomes a sacrificial victim of the god. Compelled by his desire to see the Bacchic rites, he begs to learn of those mysteries of which "it is forbidden to tell the uninitiated," which "are forbidden to say," but "are worth knowing." But he is finally discovered, then ripped limb from limb by the ecstatic Bacchae, and even beheaded by his own mother.[17]

However, perhaps the most remarkable example of the role of the Bacchic cult in the popular imagination is found in Livy's account in book 39 of his history of Rome. In 186 BCE, Livy recounts, the Roman senate met in order to discuss the growing fears about the secret Bacchic ceremonies spreading throughout Italy, bringing with them not only sexual immorality but also criminal activity and murder. In the end, the senate would call for the destruction of all Bacchic shrines and strict control of all Bacchic worship in Italy. The following account might be considered perhaps the *locus classicus* for fantasies of sexual transgression in religious ritual and would deeply inform the Western imagination for the next two thousand years.

> The pleasures of drinking and feasting were added to the religious rites, to attract a larger number of followers. When the wine had inflamed their feelings, and night and the mingling of the sexes and of different ages had extinguished all power of moral judgment, all sorts of corruption began to be practiced, since each person had ready to hand the chance of gratifying the particular desire to which he was naturally inclined. The corruption was not confined to one kind of evil, the promiscuous violation of free men and of women; the cult was also a source of supply of false witnesses, forged documents and wills, and perjured evidence, dealing also in poisons and in wholesale murders. . . . [T]he violence was concealed because no cries for help could be heard against the shriekings, the banging of drums . . . in the scene of debauchery and bloodshed.[18]

Indeed, the authorities feared that this was not just some bizarre isolated cult, but a widespread, rapidly growing subversive force that was threatening the stability of Roman society: "Debauched and debauchers, frenzied devotees, bereft of their senses . . . by the hubbub and the shouting of all that goes through the night. Up to now this conspiracy has no strength, but it is gaining a vast increase in strength in that its followers grow more numerous as the days go by."[19]

As Eliade suggests, these fantastic narratives of sexual excess and ritual violence tell us several things. Transgression, excess, and the violation of social prohibitions are here imagined as the ultimate means of surpassing the human condition and the social order alike: "The Dionysiac ecstasy means, above all, surpassing the human condition, the discovery of total deliverance, obtaining a freedom and spontaneity inaccessible to human beings. . . . [A]mong these freedoms there also figured deliverance from prohibitions, rules and conventions of an ethical and social order."[20] But at the same time, they also reveal a deeper fear of political subversion, resistance, and dissent against the imperial order; as Cohn observes, these narratives of perverse erotic orgies "belonged to the stereotype of revolutionary conspiracy against the state."[21]

Finally, these descriptions of the horrific *bacchanalia* contain many of the elements that would later become common tropes in the attacks on heretics and witches in the Christian Middle Ages. Secrecy, midnight gatherings, pederasty, organized murders, criminal behavior in order to obtain wealth—all of these would become basic motifs in the recurring nightmare of black magic and illicit sexuality for the next two thousand years.

The Feast of Love: Sexual Fantasies and Accusations in the Early Church

> They said to Him: "Shall we then, as children, enter the Kingdom?" Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one . . . and when you make the male and the female into one and the same, so that the male shall not be male nor the female female . . . then you will enter the kingdom."
>
> THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

> He would combat lust by the enjoyment of lust.
>
> CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (d. 215), *Stromata*, describing the heretical school of Carpocrates

Although it has roots in earlier Greek and Roman traditions, this narrative of sexual transgression would achieve its lasting status as a powerful and recurring nightmare with the triumph of Christianity. As Peter Brown, Elaine Pagels, and others have argued, early Christians distinguished themselves from the surrounding Mediterranean society, in part, by their austerity, chastity, and sexual control. This was at once a way of asserting their self-discipline and superiority over what was seen as an immoral, corrupt world and a way of disengaging themselves from the social obligations that bound other citizens in the Roman civic order. In the words of St. Justin, "We, who used to take pleasure in immorality, now embrace chastity alone; we, who valued above everything else the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into common ownership and share with those in need."[22]

As Pagels suggests, it was in large part by their unusual discipline and control over their sexuality that Christians asserted their superiority over what they saw as a lust-driven, carnal society: "What distinguished Christians from everyone else, according to both pagan and Christian contemporaries, was their moral rigor, which impressed even pagans hostile to the movement—abstinence from the use of the sexual organs."[23] Sexual control was, among other things, a means of liberating themselves from the existing social and political order, along with its various rules and obligations: "sexual activity risked conception and so involved both partners . . . in the economic and social obligations of family life. The example of Jesus and his followers encouraged them instead to take the subversive path *away* from such obligations—toward freedom."[24]

Not surprisingly, then, the early Christians were often perceived as a deviant and subversive threat within the Roman Empire, one that held the potential to undermine the domestic and social fabric itself. Indeed, because their attitudes, beliefs, and behavior were a "denial of the values by which Graeco-Roman society lived," they could be seen as a kind of "revolutionary political conspiracy."[25] Thus a wide variety of fantastic narratives emerged surrounding the early Christians, associating them with all manner of antisocial activity. According to an account recorded by Minucius Felix, the Christians were said to consecrate the head of a donkey, then pay reverence to the genitals of the presiding priest; their initiation rituals involved the slaughter of a child and the consumption of his blood and burned ashes; and their central ritual was a secret drunken orgy involving the most reckless incestuous sex between men and women of all ages: "Precisely the secrecy of this evil religion proves that all these things, or practically all, are true."[26]

The irony of all of this is that the charge of sexual immorality would later be appropriated and used by the Christians themselves to attack other rival factions in the early church. In the first two centuries, virtually every Christian sect would be accused of sexual promiscuity not only by pagan critics, but also by competing Christian groups. As Peter Brown concludes, "by the year 200, every Christian group had accused its own Christian rivals of bizarre sexual practices. In the time of Justin, a young man in Alexandria even petitioned the Augustal Prefect for permission to have himself castrated. Only by undergoing this drastic operation could he hope to persuade pagans that indiscriminate intercourse was not what Christian men sought in their 'sisters.'"[27]

Surely the most common target of these charges of sexual immorality were groups that were considered to be deviant, unorthodox, or subversive by the mainstream church. Nowhere is this more true than in the attacks on the various groups and individuals known as Gnostics. *Gnosticism* is itself a generic term used to refer to a wide range of sects that were eventually branded as heretical and progressively stamped out by the early Christian church between roughly the first and fifth centuries. However, despite their incredible diversity, the various sects of the Manichaeans, Valentinians, Phibionites, and Ophites, the followers of Simon Magus, and countless others do share certain common tendencies. Perhaps the most basic of these is the emphasis on *gnosis* itself—that is, direct spiritual knowledge or "insight" as the primary means of salvation from the world of suffering and death.[28] According to one of the earliest and most important Gnostic texts, the *Gospel of Thomas*, this knowledge was transmitted esoterically, through "secret sayings" by Jesus, and given only to his chosen few disciples.[29] Highly syncretic in their cosmological imagination, the Gnostics developed an extremely rich body of mythic narratives weaving together elements of Christianity, Platonic philosophy, and Near Eastern religions in elaborate speculations about the origin, structure, and end of the universe.

The recurring theme in many of these narratives is that the human soul is a particle or spark of the divine that has become lost, fallen, or entrapped in the suffering material world; the goal of spiritual practice is therefore to free the soul from its bonds in matter, to elevate it through the hierarchy of the cosmos, and to return it to its home in the spiritual realm. According to the Valentinian text *The Gospel of Philip*, the return of the soul to its true spiritual home is described as a kind of spiritual wedding, the mystery of the "bridal chamber." Death, *Philip* tells us, came into the world through the separation of Eve from Adam in Paradise; therefore, Christ has come to heal this division, by reuniting the divided soul with its spiritual counterpart and so give it eternal life: "If the woman had not separated from the man, she would not die with the man. His separation became the beginning of death. Because of this Christ came to repair the separation which was from the beginning and again unite the two. . . . But the woman is united to her husband in the bridal chamber. Indeed those who have united in the bridal chamber will no longer be separated."[30] The result of this union is the spiritual insight into one's own divine nature. For, according to *Philip,* one always becomes what one sees; thus "You saw the spirit, you became spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ. You saw [the Father, you] shall become the Father . . . you see yourself, and what you see you shall become."[31]

In contrast to the mainstream Christian churches, which had become increasingly institutionalized and hierarchical by the fourth century, the Gnostic groups often had a markedly egalitarian character. Not only did they break down institutional hierarchies of priests over laity, but many also offered new roles for women as religious authorities. According to many Gnostic texts, such as *The Thunder, Perfect Mind,* the Godhead itself transcends distinctions between male and female, containing all dualities and both sexes in one androgynous unity: "I am the first and the last. I am the honored one and the scorned one. I am the whore and the holy one. I am the wife and the virgin. I am (the mother) and the daughter. . . . I am she whose wedding is great, and I have not taken a husband. . . . I am godless and I am one whose God is great."[32] And this "androgynous" perspective often carried over into roles for human men and women as well. For example, the Gnostic teacher Marcion scandalized the Church fathers by appointing women on an equal basis with men as priests and bishops; similarly, the Valentinians regarded women as equal to men, revering them as prophets, healers, and priests.[33] Indeed, one of the most common charges leveled at the Gnostics by Church fathers like Tertullian was that they made no distinction between initiates and catechumens, allowed laymen to perform sacraments, and even gave women authority to preach: "They enter on equal terms, they listen on equal terms, they pray on equal terms. . . . And heretical women, how brazen they are! They dare to teach, to dispute, to exorcise, to promise cures, even perhaps to baptize. . . . Even members of the laity are charged with the duties of a priest."[34]

Contrary to the many charges of immorality leveled against them, most of the Gnostic sects generally had a highly puritanical, often extremely pessimistic attitude toward the human body and sexuality. The body, for Gnostics like Mani and Valentinus, was a prison and source of inevitable sorrow, and sexual desire was the most powerful force binding us to this corruptible world, a "sinister all-devouring flame" leading the soul to perish in the fire of the suffering material universe.[35] Thus *The Gospel of Philip* warns that the "sexual" imagery of the Gnostic rites should not be abused by impure or sensually minded men: "The bridal chamber is not for the beasts or for slaves or for impure women, but for free men and virgins."[36]

Nonetheless, the most common, consistent, and scathing attack launched against the Gnostics by the mainstream church was that of sexual immorality. As Peter Brown observes, "The accusations of sexual immorality made against almost all Gnostic teachers made plain that this was a matter of no small importance in the second-century Christian church."[37] One of the most infamous Gnostic teachers was Simon Magus, who was considered by his followers to be the "first god," together with his companion, Helen, the "first thought." Although Simon and Helen were widely accused of "promiscuous intercourse" and even incest, there is in fact little evidence that they or other groups actually engaged in such practices, "but always these accusations are made by outsiders with no firsthand experience of the sexual excesses they report."[38] Similarly, Clement of Alexandria spoke with disgust of the Gnostic Carpocratian sect, whose licentious gatherings involved "love feasts for uniting," which to Clement meant essentially gluttony and sexual dissipation.[39] One of the most common charges was that the Gnostics regularly gathered and consumed the male and female sexual fluids, in the belief that the semen and menstrual blood are the vessels of the soul and that by consuming these scattered seeds they could lead them to spiritual unity. According to St. Irenaeus, "the power which resides in the (female) periods and in the semen, they say, is the soul (psyche) which we collect and eat."[40]

As Brown observes, these fantastic narratives of sexual abandon and black magic represented a kind of inverted mirror of mainstream early Christianity itself, which reflect the sexual anxieties of the church in these formative years and so "tell us more about traditional Mediterranean fantasies of the world turned upside down than they do about the actual relations of men and women in the Christian communities."[41]

Probably the most elaborate and most imaginative of these accusations was that of Epiphanius, future bishop of Salamis, who described his own encounter with a deviant Gnostic sect in Egypt. After a group of lascivious women tried to seduce him, he witnessed the horrible rites of these Gnostics, who not only gorge themselves with wine and meat, but then proceed with their own horrible "love rite" (*agape*) in which they actually consume male and female sexual fluids as the body and blood of the Eucharist. Still more unspeakable acts then follow if one of the women should happen to be impregnated during these orgies:

> They serve up lavish helpings of wine and meat even if they are poor. When they have had their drink and filled their veins, as it were, to bursting point, they give themselves over to passion. The husband withdraws from his wife and says to her: "Rise up, make love with your brother." The miserable

> wretches then indulge in promiscuous intercourse. And, though it truly shames me for the disgraceful things they did . . . nevertheless I shall not recoil from saying what they did not recoil from doing, so as to arouse in my readers a shuddering horror of their scandalous behavior.
>
> After copulating, as if the crime of their whoredom were not enough, they offer up their shame to heaven. The man and woman take the man's sperm in their hands and stand looking up to heaven. With this impurity in their hands, they pray . . . offering to the natural Father of the universe what is in their hands, saying "We offer you this gift, the body of Christ." And so they eat it, partaking of their own shame and saying, "This is the body of Christ, and this is the Passover." . . . Similarly with the woman's emission at her period: they collect the menstrual blood which is unclean, take it and eat it together and say "Behold the Blood of Christ. . . . " They practice the shameful act not to beget children but for mere pleasure. . . . If one of them happens to allow the sperm to penetrate the woman and make her pregnant, listen to the outrage that they dare to perform. At the right moment they extract the embryo with their fingers and take the aborted infant and crush it with pestle and mortar; when they have mixed in honey, pepper and other spices and perfumed oils to lessen their nausea, they all assemble to the feast, every member of this troop of swine and dogs, each taking a piece of the aborted child in their fingers. . . . And this they consider the perfect Passover."[42]

Here we find a fusion of all the dark, inverted nightmares of Christian society: sensual indulgence, intoxication, illicit sexuality, consumption of sexual fluids, and finally the cannibalization of a human fetus. These are all narrative themes we will encounter again both in the attacks on later heresies and in the ritual practice of modern sexual magic.

Buggers, Free Spirits, and Templars: Sexual Heresies of the Late Middle Ages

> Their furnace is the fire of concupiscence, for the cause of all heresy is either lechery, cupidity or pride.
>
> PHILLIP THE CHANCELLOR, *In psalterium davidicum CCXXX sermones*

> The masochistic orgies of the Middle Ages, the Inquisition, the chastisements and tortures, the penances, etc. of the religious betrayed their fiction. They were unsuccessful masochistic attempts to attain sexual gratification.
>
> WILHELM REICH, *Selected Writings: An Introduction to Orgonomy*

The fears of religious heresy dangerously combined with sexual licentiousness were to recur throughout the history of Western Christianity, from the time of the Gnostics down to our own generation and our own obsessions with Satanic child abuse and devil-worshipping teenagers, but they would reach a particularly intense new height during the high and late Middle Ages, from roughly the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.

Thus, when a series of unorthodox movements emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, beginning with the Bogomils, the Cathars, and the Heresy of the Free Spirit,[43] one of the most common and almost obsessively recurring charges leveled against them was that of sexual license. As Malcolm Lambert observes, the charge of sexual immortality "came to be a natural attribute of heretics in general."[44] And the great irony of these accusations is that again, much like the Gnostics, these groups tended on the whole to be anything but hedonistic or sexually indulgent; on the contrary, they were generally highly ascetic and even antisexual. The Bogomils, for example, were a strict ascetic group that emerged in the Balkan region during the tenth or eleventh century. Not unlike the Manichaean Gnostics, they held a strongly dualistic worldview that identified the material world and body with the forces of darkness, condemning marriage and sex as unclean relations.[45] Nonetheless, the Bogomils would be widely attacked as lascivious hypocrites who engaged in all manner of sexual vice, and above all homosexuality.[46] Indeed, our own modern English slang *bugger* (French *bougre*) is derived from the Latin *Bulgarus* used for the Bogomils, who had become notorious for their alleged practice of sodomy.

Still more powerful and controversial, however, was the closely related heresy of the Cathars (from Greek *katharos*, or "pure"), or Albigensians. Like Bogomils, the Cathars were a fundamentally dualist movement that identified evil with the material body, which was in effect largely a "source of pain and an alien imposition on true nature that are pure spirit."[47] Consequently, they also condemned marriage, sexual intercourse, and procreation of children, which only perpetuate existence in this suffering physical realm. Rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church as a corrupt and self-serving institution, the Cathars quickly drew a large following from a wide array of groups that had become disaffected with "the world, with its social organization (feudal society) and with its guide, the Church of Rome."[48] From their origins in central France in the early eleventh century, the Cathars would spread widely throughout Belgium, Spain, and Italy, attracting not only poorer classes but also artisans, burgesses, and various nobility, to become one of the most powerful heresies of the late Middle Ages.

The Cathars would soon, however, meet with fierce opposition from both the church and the political authorities. Already in 1022, thirteen Cathars were tried and condemned to be burned, and the persecutions only intensified as their numbers and influence increased. The Cathars would finally become the subjects of not only the Inquisition but an entire war, the Albigensian Crusade, which would lead to their decimation by the end of the thirteenth century.[49]

Once again, the most common charge aimed at the Cathars was their indulgence in secret sexual vices and even Satanism. Pope Gregory IX, one of the fiercest in the fight against heresy, became persuaded that the Cathars were licentious devil worshippers. In his bull of 1233, he described in vivid detail the practices of these worshippers of Satan. The Cathars, according to this account, believed that the Lord had done evil in casting out Lucifer and that Lucifer would ultimately return to glory when the Lord had fallen from power. Thus they worshipped their dark master in elaborate ceremonies that involved a "banquet and the appearance of a black cat, whose hind quarters were kissed by most of those present," and culminated with the "extinguishing of the lights followed by a promiscuous and sometimes homosexual orgy."[50]

Perhaps the primary reason for the intense persecution of the Cathars, Bogomils, and other groups was simply that they represented a forceful and popular challenge to the existing structure of power. And, as Carol Lansing argues, the debate between the Cathars and the church centered primarily around the body and sex. For the dualist, antimaterial, and antisexual teachings of the Cathars posed a radical threat to the authority of the church and the political order alike; according to Cathar belief, human beings can become perfect and free themselves from the bonds of the material world by their own rational choice and free will, without need for external political or religious authority: "Capable of rational control, they can purify themselves of matter and again become perfect. Do they then need control by outside authorities?" Second and more important, however, the Cathars also subverted existing gender roles, marriage, and the entire structure of patriarchal authority in the household and in society: "Cathar beliefs challenged established gender roles: a teaching common to virtually all Cathar texts is the condemnation of marriage and procreation. A woman's role as wife and mother has no value, since giving birth and nurturing children only perpetuates the evil of existence in the body. . . . [B]oth sexes could become perfects, preach, and administer the sacrament."[51]

In short, the primary reason for the persecution of such groups was that they were attempting—not unlike the early Christians under the Roman Empire—to *liberate* themselves from the existing social structure by means of an alternative sexual politics. Yet ironically, as they were refracted through the lens of the dominant religious and political order, the charge brought against them was precisely that of *sexual liberation* in the sense of illicit, immoral sexual relations.

However, perhaps the most infamous group charged with the combined sins of devil worship, black magic, and licentiousness was the order of the Knights Templar. As we will see in chapter 3, many important magical orders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the Ordo Templi Orientis and the followers of Aleister Crowley, would claim to be continuing the tradition of the Templars. And many popular authors today identify the Templars as the original source of Western sexual magic itself. Thus popular sex magic author Donald Michael Kraig speculates that the Templars adapted their sexual secrets from the Sufis in the Arab world, who in turn had borrowed them from the Tantric traditions of India and then passed them on to the medieval alchemists and finally on to modern magicians.[52]

Most of this association of the Templars with sexual magic and Satanism, however, is most likely imaginary and very likely inspired more by political motivations than by factual evidence. Founded in 1118 by two French knights, the Order of Temple was conceived as a military monastic fraternity with the dual role of defending the newly established crusader kingdom of Jerusalem and protecting poor pilgrims in the Holy Land. Combining as it did religious fervor with martial prowess, the order soon became enormously popular and was showered with spiritual and material favors from ecclesiastical and lay authorities alike. Indeed, it would quickly grow into one of the most powerful and wealthy orders of the late Middle Ages, receiving temporal rewards from the rulers of virtually every European state.

By the early thirteenth century, however, the Templars had come under increasing suspicion from the church, and eventually also from the French king. In 1238 Pope Gregory IX suspected the Templars of heresy, and in 1272 a council of the church declared the order in need of reform. Finally, in 1307, King Philip de Bel launched a persecution of the order on the grounds that it was infected with sodomy, bestiality, and heresy. From 1307 to 1314 the order was interrogated by the Inquisition and finally abolished by Pope Clement himself. The reason for the intense suspicion and persecution of the order is probably twofold. On the one hand, the knights did surround their order with a significant degree of secrecy. By the mid-thirteenth century they imposed strict regulations "forbidding the brothers to make public the chapter proceedings of the order or to allow outsiders to see copies of the rule."[53] In particular, the ceremony of reception into the order was a highly esoteric affair, which aroused all variety of suspicion as to what sort of dark rituals or illicit acts might be taking place behind the veils of secrecy. On the other hand, probably the more important reason for the persecution of the order was simply its increasing wealth and power; exempt as they were from any form of taxation, and given exorbitant privileges in the Holy

Land, the Templars soon aroused the jealousy and finally antipathy from religious and secular factions alike.

The charges brought against the order by the Inquisition bear a striking resemblance to ones we have already encountered in the case of the Gnostics and other accused heretics: these included "strange and unheard of things, terrible to hear of . . . an abominable work, a detestable disgrace, a thing almost inhuman," ranging from blasphemy against Christ and the church, to homosexual intercourse, to worship of an idol of a demon called Baphomet. The charges included the following:

> The Templars denied Christ when they were received into the Order. . . . They spat on the Cross and defiled it.
>
> They exchanged obscene kisses at their reception into the Order.
>
> . . . [T]hey were made to swear that they would not leave the Order, receptions were held in secret and sodomy was encouraged. . . .
>
> They adored a cat.
>
> They did not believe in the Mass or other sacraments of the Church. Their priests did not speak the words of consecration in the Mass. . . .
>
> They practiced sodomy.
>
> They venerated an idol, a bearded male head, and said that the head had great powers.[54]

Already by early 1308, 134 of the 138 Templars arrested in Paris had confessed to some or all of these charges, with Grand Master James of Molay leading the way. Finally, in 1312, Pope Clement read out the bull, *Vox in excelso,* that abolished the Order of the Temple. Not only did the Templars engage in "secret and clandestine" rituals, but it was also known incontestably that "many horrible things" had been done "by very many brothers of this Order who have lapsed into the sin of wicked apostasy against the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the crime of detestable idolatry, the execrable outrage of the Sodomites."[55]

Ironically, although most of these charges of sodomy and Satanism brought against the Cathars, Bogomils, and Templars were probably imaginary, and probably also politically motivated, they would reappear in a striking new form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the foundation of a new Templar order—the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), among whose members was the Great Beast, Aleister Crowley. And the OTO would in fact make homosexual intercourse, a full-scale "Gnostic Mass," and in Crowley's case worship of Baphomet key parts of their esoteric practice (see below, chapter 4).

The Witches' Sabbath and Demon Lovers

> All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. . . . Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils . . . it is no matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft.
>
> HEINRICH KRAMER AND JAMES SPRENGER, *Malleus Maleficarum*

> It is difficult if not impossible to distinguish between the real and the imaginary elements in the witches' testimonies with regard to their secret "orgies."
>
> MIRCEA ELIADE, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions*

Surely the most infamous, and still today most widely debated and discussed, example of the association between magic and sexuality lies in the witch trials of late medieval and early modern Europe. Between 1450 and 1750, the ancient nightmare of black magic and sexual license burst forth in its most concrete and most horrible form, as thousands of persons, most of them women, were killed because of their alleged practice of sexual magic.

A wide range of scholars have offered theories as to the specific historical, religious, and social causes of the witchcraft persecutions. According to some more romantic scholars like Margaret Murray, there was in fact an ancient, pre-Christian, goddess-centered and matriarchal religion that was later demonized by the church and branded as "witchcraft."[56] According to others, like Norman Cohn, the witch hunts were really a kind of imaginary scapegoating and a "return of the repressed," that is, the projection of Europe's own violent and sexual conflicts onto certain marginal groups; for others, it was in large part a result of changing gender roles, as largely male-dominated medicine rose to power and largely female-dominated midwifery and folk healing were increasingly branded as barbaric, uncivilized, pagan, and even demonic.[57] And others have argued it was a result of the church's own long-held suspicion of sex in all forms, which in turn led to the condemnation of any form of orgiastic or sexual-magical behavior. As Eliade suggests, "Because of the Judeo-Christian *demonization* of sexuality, any type of orgy was considered satanic and consequently a sacrilege, deserving the harshest punishment."[58]

But at least two things seem fairly clear: (1) the overwhelming majority of the victims were women; and (2) there was a widespread association of black magic with illicit sexuality, usually in the form of orgiastic rituals or intercourse with demons. As D. P. Walker observes, there was an apparent obsession with sex among the witch-hunters, and "the treatises on witchcraft became almost pornographic."[59] A remarkably consistent and probably largely imaginary narrative evolved regarding the witches and their nocturnal orgies, which bears a striking resemblance to the charges leveled at the Bacchae of the Greco-Roman world and the Gnostics of early Christianity:

> Male and female witches met at night, generally in solitary places, in fields or on mountains . . . having anointed their bodies, they flew, arriving astride broomsticks. . . . Those who came for the first time had to renounce the Christian faith, desecrate the sacrament and offer homage to the devil. . . . There would follow banquets, dancing, sexual orgies. Before returning home, the female and male witches received evil ointments made from children's fat and other ingredients.[60]

Above all, sexual excess was one of the most common and damning charges leveled at accused witches. According to the classic witch-hunter's manual, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), sin first came to human beings through sexual intercourse, and thus it is the primary avenue through which the devil can work: "since the first corruption of sin by which man became the slave of the devil came to us through the act of generation, therefore greater power is allowed by God to the devil in this act than in all others." And women being more inclined by their nature to "infidelity, ambition, and lust," they are inherently "more than others inclined towards witchcraft."[61] A particularly vivid description of the witches' Sabbath is given in an early-seventeenth-century text, Francesco Maria Guazzo's *Compendium Maleficarum:* here the witches first repudiate their baptism and take a new name from the Devil; they give their clothes, blood, and children to the Devil and beg him to inscribe their names in the book of death; and they vow to strangle a child in his honor once or twice a month. Finally, the witches dance and feast in the Devil's honor, and then "in the foulest manner they copulate with their demon lovers."[62]

As Walter Stephens has recently argued in *Demon Lovers,* this obsession with demonic sexuality was a result of the growing crisis of faith in early modern Europe. This crisis brought with it an increasing desire to experience the supernatural—even if a demonic form of the supernatural—in the most embodied, physical way as a means of countering the rising skepticism about the existence of the spiritual realm in a slowly disenchanted and more rationalized late medieval world. With their obsessive attention to sexual transgression and intercourse with demons, the witch-hunters and theologians could reconfirm their own faith in the unseen world: "Copulation offered valuable perspectives on the life of demons, their corporeality and the possibility of interacting meaningfully with them . . . demonic copulation served to anthropomorphize demons. Sabbatic evidence demonstrated that real human interaction was possible between witches and devils."[63] Thus some of the witchcraft literature is incredibly graphic in its

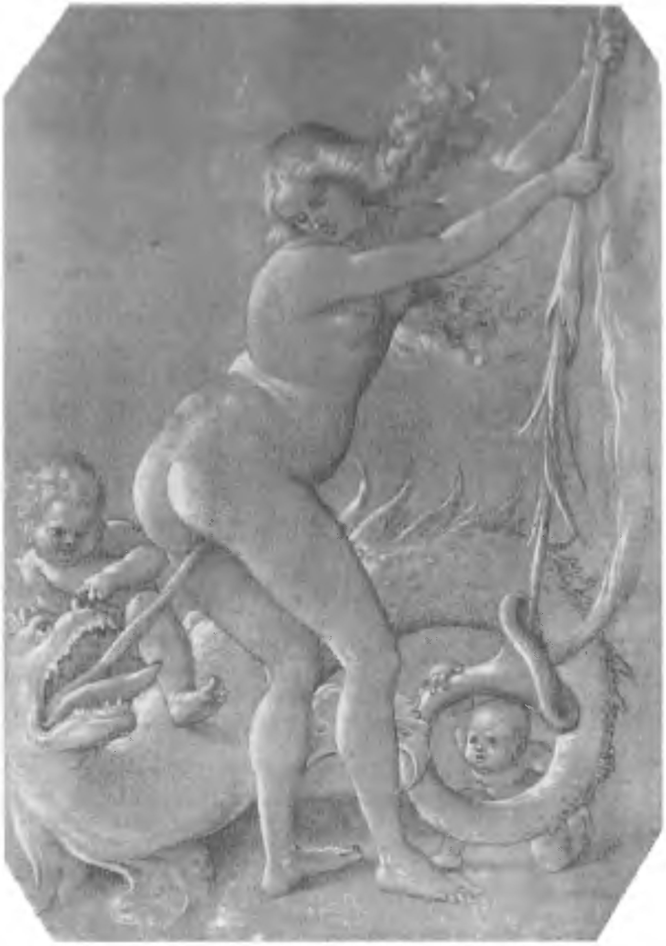


Figure 1. Hans Baldung Grien, "Naked Young Witch with Fiend in the Shape of a Dragon" (1575). From Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 109.

description of the sexuality of demons and the nature of demon-witch intercourse. In Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's *Strix, sive de ludificatione daemonum* (1523), we find a remarkably frank dialogue between a witch (*strix*) and her questioner, Apistius,

> APISTIUS: We know that demons have neither bones nor flesh. . . .
> How can they copulate?
>
> STRIX: The parts put on by them are similar to flesh and bones,
> but bigger than those of any mortal.[64]

It is then explained why witches are so addicted to the act of intercourse with demons, who apparently have the ability to satisfy their desires in ways that no mortal man ever could:

APISTIUS: But I still cannot understand the meaning of all this copulation. . . . Nor can my understanding grasp the reason for so much sensual pleasure [*voluptas*].

DICASTES: Witches claim they are so overcome by it that they swear there is no pleasure like it on earth. . . . First, because those rebellious spirits put on a most pleasing face. Next, because their [virile] members are of an uncommon size. . . . [W]ith their members they fill up the most secret parts of the witches. . . . And probably they can stimulate something deep inside the witches, by means of which these women have greater pleasure than with men.[65]

Although these narratives probably have little grounding in reality, they are striking examples of three recurring themes that we have seen throughout this chapter: (1) the remarkably persistent association between black magic and sexuality; (2) the widespread belief that magical sex is not only different from but unimaginably better than ordinary sex; and (3) the association of sex and magic with groups and individuals who are marginal or outsiders (women, heretics, those who oppose or seek liberation from the existing social order, etc.). These are themes that inform most of the literature on sexual magic from the nineteenth century down to our own generation. As we will see in chapter 7, they also form the basis for the most elaborate Christian nightmare of all: the nightmare of the Black Mass, which began to appear in early modern Europe and was reinvented in the late twentieth century by new movements like the Church of Satan.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF SEX MAGIC IN THE WEST: ALCHEMY, MAGIC, AND KABBALAH

> And if you wish to see the reality of this mystery, then you should see the wonderful representation of the intercourse that takes place between male and female.
>
> Coptic version of the Hermetic *Asclepius*

If we acknowledge the fact that most of the associations of sexuality and magic in the West were highly imaginative, even paranoid fantasies and that they were most often guided by political motivations, does that then mean that there is no real historical basis to the practice of modern sexual magic? The simple answer is, no, of course not: there are many techniques and practices from ancient Greece to medieval Kabbalah that clearly formed the basis for modern sexual magic. The longer and more complicated answer, however, is that although there are indeed many early antecedents and contributing streams, they do not entirely explain the remarkable new flood of sexual magic in the modern era.

It is true that sexual imagery has long been used to express the ineffable nature of mystical experience or spiritual vision. We have already seen this throughout early Gnostic literature, in the mystery of the bridal chamber and the Valentinian search for divine union: For Valentinus, in his yearning to overcome "otherness," "The transcendence of all divisions, even of a division as seemingly irremovable as that between male and female, was the surest sign that the redemption offered by Christ had come to the believer."[66] One of the more explicit examples of this use of imagery can be found in the Coptic version of the Hermetic text *Asclepius*, which describes sexual intercourse as a "wonderful representation" of this secret spiritual mystery:

> For when the semen reaches its climax, it leaps forth. In that moment the female receives the strength of the male; the male for his part receives the strength of the female, while the semen does this. Therefore the mystery of intercourse is performed in secret, in order that the two sexes might not disgrace themselves in front of many who do not experience that reality . . . if it happens in the presence of those who do not understand the reality (it is) laughable and unbelievable. And, moreover, they are holy mysteries, of both words and deeds, because not only are they not heard, but also they are not seen.[67]

Yet despite the very common use of sexual symbolism throughout Gnostic texts, there is little evidence (apart from the accusations of the early church) that the Gnostics engaged in any actual performance of sexual rituals, and certainly not anything resembling modern sexual magic.[68]

Probably the most obvious place to look for historical antecedents to modern sexual magic is in the wide array of literature on "love magic" that circulated throughout the ancient Greek world. As Christopher Faraone has shown, love magic was ubiquitous throughout the ancient world from the time of Homer down to early Christian hagiography.[69] And by love magic, he means two primary techniques: namely those used to induce *philia* and similar affections in men as opposed to rituals that men usually employ to throw *eros* into women. While the *philia* magic was typically used within a household or an existing relationship to increase a man's affection and esteem for his partner, the charms for *eros* were generally used to begin a new relationship by forcing the victim into the arms of the person who performs the spell: "the spell is designed explicitly to arouse the victim's sexual desire."[70] The spells for inducing *philia* typically involve such techniques as incantations over amulets, knotted cords, rings, love potions, or ointments, while the spells for inducing *eros* involve more extreme measures, such as "incantations over images, tortured animals, burning materials or apples," aimed at maddening the victims and "emboldening them to leave their homes and come to the practitioner."[71]

Similar techniques of love magic would survive throughout the Christian Middle Ages in a wide range of European, Byzantine, Coptic, and other magical traditions. If we scan the history of Western magic, we find no shortage of erotic spells to attract women, spells to make women pregnant, "spells for sex and business," and so forth.[72] Yet while all of this provides an interesting basis for the connection between love, sex, and magic in the Western tradition, it does not really provide the basis for sexual magic as we see it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For in these texts, magic is being used to generate sexual desire; modern magicians, however, would turn the operation around, that is, by using sexual desire and orgasm to bring about magical effects.

When the Two Are Found as One: Sacred Sexuality in Jewish Kabbalah

> [W]hen a man cleaves to his mate and his desire is to receive her, he worships before the holy King and arouses another union, for the desire of the Holy One, blessed be He, is to cleave to the community of Israel.
>
> *Zohar* III, 37b

Surely one of the most influential forces in the rise of modern sexual magic was the complex body of texts and traditions that make up Jewish Kabbalah. A rich fusion of metaphysical speculation and mythic imagination, Kabbalah grew out of Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, early Jewish mysticism, and various other elements that began to merge in the Middle Ages and came into full flower between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. Not unlike Gnosis, Kabbalah is a highly esoteric tradition, claiming to reveal the inner, deeper levels of meaning hidden within the Torah and transmitted in a closely guarded chain through the centuries.[73]

Erotic symbolism is pervasive throughout Kabbalistic literature, used in various ways as a means to describe the relationship between the Torah and her lover, the Kabbalist,[74] and as a means to describe the interrelations between different aspects of the divine realm itself. According to most Kabbalistic traditions, there is a series of ten divine emanations, or potencies (*sefirot*), which radiate from the divine abyss, or Godhead, in a succession of male-female pairs. Often the *sefirot* are imagined in the form of a divine (male) body, or *anthropos*, complete with its own penis.[75] Much of Kabbalistic meditation and spiritual practice is aimed at rejoining the male and female aspects of the divine body that are manifest as the *sefirot*. And because human beings here on this earth are a mirror of the divine realm and the male-female *sefirot* above, physical sexual intercourse between husband and wife can also serve as a spiritual technique to rejoin the *sefirot* and so assist in the unification of the male and the female aspects of God. Ultimately, in the words of the classic thirteenth-century text the *Zohar*, this union of man and wife in turn symbolizes the union of God with his bride, the community of Israel itself:

> When there is male and female, and he is sanctified in the supernal holiness, . . . when a man is in the union of male and female, and he intends to be sanctified . . . then he is complete and is called one without any blemish. Therefore a man should gladden his wife at that time, to invite her to be of one will with him. . . . When the two are found as one, then they are one in soul and body.[76]

These texts make it clear, however, that this union is anything but a matter of sexual license or hedonism. On the contrary, this union is imagined as the joining of the divine King and the Shekinah, and as such, the husband and wife must treat it with deepest respect, preparing themselves by strict celibacy for six days before the Sabbath:

> Students of the Torah . . . make themselves "eunuchs" during the six days of the week for the Torah's sake, and on Sabbath nights have their conjugal union, because they apprehend the supernal mystery of right moment when the Matrona [Shekinah] is united with the King.[77]

According to other Kabbalists, at the moment of sexual union, the mind of the husband is in fact elevated to the supernal realm and draws down the divine light and the Shekinah herself. These spiritual forces descend into the drop of semen, infusing spirit into the seed. According to one of the most influential early Kabbalistic texts, *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*,

> [W]hen the husband copulates with his wife, and his thought unites with the supernal entities, that very thought draws the supernal light downward and it [the light] dwells upon the drop [of semen] upon which he directs his intention and thought. . . . [T]hat very drop is permanently linked with the brilliant light. . . . [S]ince the thought is on it [the drop] is linked to the supernal entities and it draws the brilliant light downward.[78]

In spite of their larger goal of *unio mystica*, none of these Kabbalistic sexual practices appears to involve any of the explicitly sexual-magical elements that begin to appear in nineteenth-century Western esotericism; that is, they do not explicitly employ orgasm as a means to focus the will and bring about magical effects in the physical world. More importantly, whereas most modern forms of sexual magic center around an ideal of radical freedom and social liberation, the Kabbalistic tradition is for the most part highly conservative, even "hyper-nomian." Nonetheless, the imagery and certain aspects of the metaphysics of the Kabbalah would indeed be a central influence (though often in a rather garbled form) throughout modern sexual magic.

Perhaps the most controversial sexual practices to emerge out of the later Kabbalistic tradition appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the wake of the great "Jewish messiah," Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76). The most infamous of these movements was that of Jacob Frank (born Yakov ben Judah Leib Frankovich, 1726–91), who proclaimed himself a new messiah and led a powerful spiritual movement in Poland, Austria, and Germany. Whereas most traditional forms of Kabbalah are quite conservative with respect to Jewish law, the Frankists would be accused of all manner of transgressions, particularly of sexual taboos. There is today some debate as to how much actual transgression or sexual license took place among the Frankists. Some scholars, like Gershom Scholem, have described Frank as "one of the most frightening phenomena in the whole of Jewish history: a religious leader who . . . was in all his actions a truly corrupt and degenerate individual."[79] As Scholem suggests, organized religion was for Frank "only a cloak to be put on and be thrown away again on the way to the 'sacred knowledge' . . . where all traditional values are destroyed," while "nihilistic religion" was the means to usher in a new messianic Judaism through "the birth pangs of a universal upheaval."[80] In Frank's words,

> Christ . . . said that he had come to redeem the world from the hands of the devil, but I have come to redeem it from all the laws and customs that have ever existed. It is my task to annihilate all this so that the Good God can reveal Himself.[81]

More recent scholars, like Harris Lenowitz, however, argue that the antinomian element in Frank and other Jewish Messiahs was more often a matter of rumor than reality. Scholem's own biases may have led him (and many others) to highlight the immoral, violent, and sexual nature of their teachings.[82] But whether Frank's sexual transgressions were a matter of historical fact or popular fantasy, he would persist in the modern occult imagination as a figure who stood for absolute freedom and liberation from the world's laws, including its sexual laws.

Erotic Magic and Spiritual Manipulation in the Renaissance

> As regards all those who are dedicated to philosophy of magic, it is fully apparent that the highest bond, the most important and the most general, belongs to Eros: and that is why the Platonists called love the Great Demon, daemon magnus.
>
> GIORDANO BRUNO, *Theses de Magia*

Perhaps the clearest early predecessors of modern sexual magic emerged during the Renaissance, particularly in the works of Italian philosophers and magicians like Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). Drawing upon a wide array of philosophical, theological, and magical traditions, and particularly from Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, Ficino established the Platonic Academy in Florence around 1450. In addition to translating a number of key ancient texts, such as the *Corpus Hermeticum* and a series of Neoplatonic texts on demonology, Ficino devoted a good deal of attention to the theory of magic, in both its spiritual and demonic forms. According to Ficino, the forces of magic and eros are inextricably entwined; for both magic and eros work by the principle of attraction, the drawing together of similar things, which is the very force that holds the universe itself together:

> The whole power of Magic is founded on Eros. The way Magic works is to bring things together through their inherent similarity. . . . [I]n our body, the brain, the lungs, the heart, liver and other organs interact, favor each other, intercommunicate and feel reciprocal pain. From this relationship is born Eros, which is common to them all; from this Eros is born their mutual rapprochement, wherein resides true Magic.[83]

Both eros and magic work through the same universal pneuma, or soul of the world, that flows through all parts of the universe, just as the human soul flows through all parts of the physical body. Eros is the attractive power that holds all things together, from the stars in the heavens to the blades of grass on earth, and magic is the art of understanding and manipulating the attractive relations between parts of the world, binding desired objects to the magician. Magic can work through a variety of media, from music and poetry to works of art. For example, one of the more common techniques is the use of talismans inscribed with images, usually of the stars (for example, an image of the goddess Venus for Venus, or of Apollo for the Sun). The talisman is then able to draw down the life of particular stars, "capturing astral currents pouring down from above and using them for life and health."[84] Ultimately, the magician is able to know and control the various attractive forces flowing through the cosmos, just as a lover binds and creates a magic "web" around his love: "the lover and the magician both do the same thing: they cast their 'nets' to capture certain objects, to attract and draw them to them."[85]

If Ficino first formulated the equation "eros = magic," then the man who would take this equation to its next logical and more practical level was controversial philosopher, master of the art of memory, and defender of Copernican theory Giordano Bruno. Building upon this belief in the erotic nature of magic, Bruno suggests that magic works primarily through the power of *phantasy,* and secondarily through sounds and images that pass through the senses; the latter then impress certain mental states of attraction or aversion upon the imagination. Once his imagination has been influenced in this way, an individual can be manipulated by the magician, to whom he is now bound by "chains" (*vincula*). The magician can thus bind the person with a variety of chains, arousing in him "hope, compassion, fear, love, hate, indignation, anger, joy, patience, disdain for life and death, for fortune." But eros is for Bruno the "bond of bonds" (*vinculum vinculorum*), the basis of all magic and the manipulation of other beings: "all bonds are either reduced to the bond of love, depend on the bond of love or are based on the bond of love. . . . [L]ove is the foundation of all feelings."[86] As D. P. Walker observes, Bruno's system of erotic magic appears to have had grand ambitions indeed, as a complex method for the "chaining" and control of beings on a widespread scale: "Bruno . . . made a remarkable attempt to evolve a technique, explicitly based on sexual attraction for global emotional control."[87]

This association between eros and magic is the occult foundation for most magical practice since the nineteenth century. And, as we will see in the following chapters, many later magicians would take this goal of "global emotional control" to even more ambitious extremes.

The Alchemy of Imagination:
The Mystical Marriage in Renaissance Alchemy

> [W]hen the seed of the man embraces the seed of the woman, this
> is the first sign and the key of this whole work and art.
> PARACELSUS, *Concerning the Spirits of the Planets*

After Renaissance magic and Kabbalah, probably the most important source for the modern "science" of sexual magic was the tradition of alchemy. The origins of Western alchemy can probably be traced back to Alexandria in the third century BCE. After passing into the Greco-Roman world, the alchemical art soon mixed with a variety of Neoplatonic, Gnostic, and Hermetic mystical traditions. With the triumph of Christianity and the fall of the Roman Empire, the alchemical arts were lost to the Latin world for a millennium, surviving only among the Arabs. The art was not reintroduced into the West until 1182, with the revival of Greek learning in Europe and the first Latin translation from an Arab text by Robert of Chester.[88]

By the time of the Renaissance, alchemy had evolved into a rich and highly symbolic tradition, and in fact a spiritual art aimed not just at transformation of physical substances but at spiritual transformation and divine union. Among the most important figures in this "spiritual alchemy" was the surgeon, chemist, and pioneer of modern medicine Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1541), better known as Paracelsus ("greater than Celsus"). Drawing upon both the erotic magical ideas of Renaissance Neoplatonism and the new scientific and medical knowledge of the sixteenth century, Paracelsus saw in alchemy not simply a physical process aimed at transforming base metals (such as lead into gold) or a chemical process aimed at achieving the elixir of life (*elixir vitale*), but also a mystical process taking place within the magus himself.[89]

Paracelsus's importance for modern sexual magic is at least twofold. The first is his work on alchemy, which not only revolutionized the art but also articulated it in its most influential form. Like most late medieval and Renaissance alchemists, Paracelsus describes the art using explicitly sexual imagery. Indeed, Julius Evola has described the alchemical work itself as a kind of "sex magic."[90] According to Paracelsus, the Philosopher's Stone is created through the union and transformation of sulfur and salt, here compared to the union of Sol and Luna, the cosmic male and female principles. However, in order to be truly united, they need to be joined with a third thing—namely Mercury, which unites them as spirit completes soul and body. This process is also compared to the union of man and woman, who are united by sperm in order to create a child:

> There are also two matters of the Stone, Sol and Luna, formed together in a proper marriage. . . . [A]s we see that the man or the woman, without the seed of both, cannot generate, in the same way our man, Sol, and his wife, Luna, cannot conceive . . . without the seed and sperm of both. Hence the philosophers gathered that a third thing was necessary, namely, the animated seed of both. . . . Such a sperm is Mercury, which, by the conjunction of both bodies, Sol and Luna, receives their nature into self in union.

The result of this alchemical marriage is nothing less than the birth of the new spiritual being, the hermaphroditic Adam, who contains his own

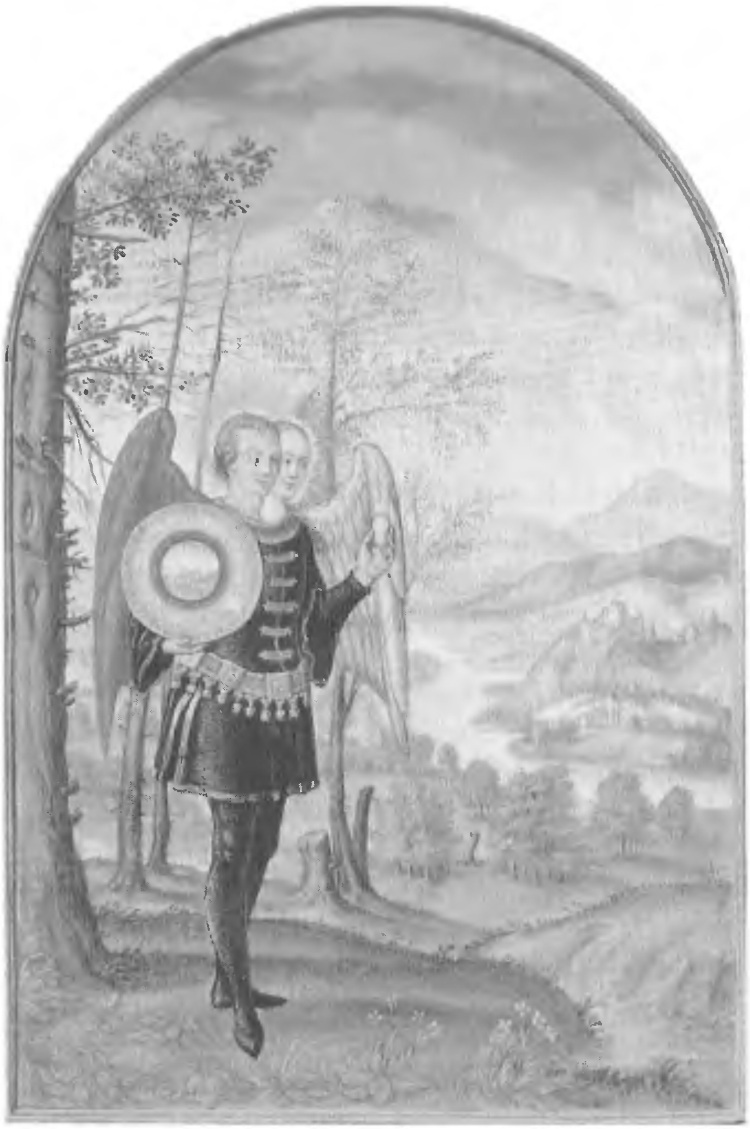


Figure 2. Alchemical Androgyne from *Splendor Solis.* From Elemire Zola, *The Androgyne: Reconciliation of Male and Female* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 61.

female principle within himself, just as Adam originally contained Eve within himself in Paradise:

> Hence the philosophers have said that this same Mercury is composed of body, spirit and soul. . . . They even called it their Adam, who carries his own invisible Eve hidden in his body, from that moment in which they were united by the power of the Supreme God. . . . [T]he matter of the Philosopher's Stone is none other than a fiery and perfect Mercury extracted by Nature and Art; that is the . . . true hermaphroditic Adam.[91]

The second and no less important influence of Paracelsus on modern magic lay in his central belief in the power of the Imagination (*imaginatio*). Like Ficino and Bruno, Paracelsus believed that magic worked primarily through the imagination, which is not mere illusion or fantasy (*phantasia*) but a spiritual force that has real effects in the physical world. "Man . . . is altogether a star. Even as he imagines himself to be, such he is, and he is that also which he imagines. If he imagines fire, there results fire; if war, there ensues war . . . the imagination is in itself a complete sun."[92] Indeed, Paracelsus describes the imagination as a kind of "seminal power," which impresses the "seeds" of the magician's will onto external objects: "God planted the seed in all its reality and specificity deep in the imagination of man. . . . If a man has the will, the desire arises in his imagination and the desire generates the seed." Imagination is, again, closely tied to sexual desire; thus, a woman can deeply inform the nature of a fetus, bearing children "similar to her imaginations."[93] Conversely, a woman who is overly lustful or unchaste can project dangerous things out of her imaginations, such as incubi, succubi, and even plague.[94] It is through his power of imagination, moreover, that the alchemist makes the physical act of transmuting minerals into a spiritual act, through which he himself is transformed, purified, and reborn as a spiritual being: "*imaginatio* is the active power . . . of the higher man within. . . . During this work man is 'raised up in his mind.' . . . While the artifex heats the chemical substance in the furnace he himself is morally undergoing the same fiery torment and purification."[95]

This model of alchemy as a spiritual, but also highly "erotic" art and this view of the imagination as force of active magical power would both have a formative influence on most modern forms of sexual magic. Indeed, practices such as Randolph's *magia sexualis* would effectively combine these two ideas in a new form of "affectional alchemy."

Sexual and Conjugial Love in the Work of Emanuel Swedenborg and William Blake

> The love of the sex is with the natural man; but conjugial love with the spiritual.
>
> EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, *The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugial Love*

> O holy Generation! [Image] of regeneration! . . .
> Birthplace of the Lamb of God incomprehensible!
>
> WILLIAM BLAKE, *Jerusalem*

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these various streams of erotic magic, Kabbalah, and alchemy had begun to flow together and commingle in the midst of the European Enlightenment. One of the most important forefathers of modern sexual magic—and arguably one of the most influential figures in the rise of spiritualism and new religious movements—was Swedish philosopher, politician, scientist, and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). A truly remarkable individual, Swedenborg wrote widely on science, mathematics, and geology, even as he worked actively as a politician and assessor on the Board of Mines. In 1743, however, he received a divine revelation, a direct perception of the spiritual world, which allowed him to see heaven and hell and to converse with angels. This revelation was followed by a series of elaborate visions, along with a tremendous outpouring of writings on the spiritual world and the interpretation of scripture.[96]

A key part of Swedenborg's life and writings is the nature of love, in both its spiritual and physical expressions. As Robert Rix puts it, "At the heart of Swedenborg's conception of True Religion was a sexual theology."[97] Although Swedenborg never married, he seems throughout his later work to have been extremely interested in the question of sex; moreover, he did in fact keep mistresses and advocated legal brothels, and his dream journals contain a great deal of highly erotic imagery.[98] Yet he saw in sexual intercourse not simply a source of physical pleasure or a means of reproduction, but a divine mystery of profound metaphysical significance, and ultimately a key to spiritual union. Marsha Keith Schuchard suggests that it is possible that Swedenborg had learned something of Kabbalistic sexual techniques, and perhaps even something of Taoist or Tantric sexual techniques from soldiers and missionaries returning to Europe after traveling in the East.[99]

Whatever his sources, Swedenborg was particularly preoccupied with the topic of sex in his later years, when it appears throughout his journals, such as his *Journal of Dreams* (Schuchard argues that there is evidence in these journals that Swedenborg employed difficult techniques of meditation, visualization, and breath control aimed at transforming sexual energy into states of altered consciousness and mystical experience).[100] His most important text on the subject is his treatise on *The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugial Love* (*Delitiae sapientiae de amore conjugiali*, 1768), which explores the relationship between physical sex and spiritual love. As Swedenborg defines it, conjugial love is the most profound spiritual union between man and woman in their innermost selves, a kind of inner wedding of male and female:

> [C]onjugial love . . . is the inmost of all loves, and such that partner sees partner in mind (animus) and mind (mens), so that each partner has the other in himself or herself, that is, that the image, nay, the likeness of the husband is in the mind of the wife and the image and likeness of the wife is in the

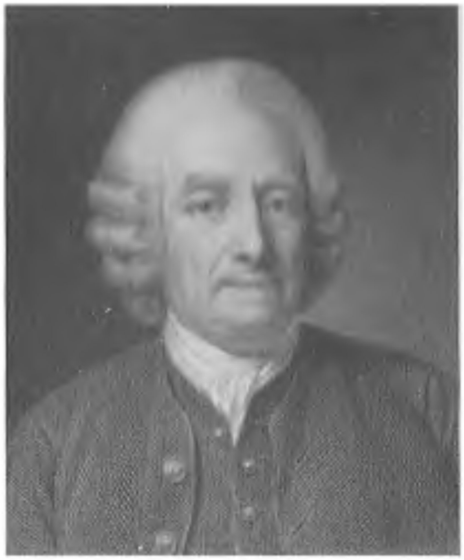


Figure 3. Emanuel Swedenborg, from George Trobridge, *Life of Emanuel Swedenborg* (New York: New-Church Press, 1928), frontispiece.

> mind of the husband, so that one sees the other in himself, and they thus cohabit in their inmosts.[101]

And this inner, conjugial union, in turn, re-creates the primordial unity of the human being (*homo*) as a total being that contains both male and female within itself:

> [L]ove is nothing else than a desire and thence an effort towards conjunction; and conjugial love to conjunction into one. For the male man and female man were so created that from two they may become as one man, or one flesh; and when they become one, then taken together they are a man (*homo*) in his fullness.[102]

The key point, however, is that this union is not limited purely to the spiritual or mystical plane for Swedenborg. Rather, as in the Kabbalistic tradition, physical love and actual sexual union can also serve as a ladder or stepping-stone to this higher state of conjugial love, and in turn, the spiritual power of conjugial love will then flow back and sanctify physical union:

> Carnal love can be *holy* because it is the first step on the ladder to the true love of God. The "love of the Sex" may first be "corporeal," but "as man was born to become spiritual," it also becomes spiritual. . . . Access to the divine state of the human through "conjugial love" lies not only in the unification of minds but also "in the organs consecrated to generation." [103]

Swedenborg's views on conjugial love would have a tremendous impact on most later esoteric and occult traditions in the West from the eighteenth century onward. They would, moreover, soon be linked to ideals of social and political liberation. Among the many authors deeply influenced by Swedenborg, for example, was British mystic and poet William Blake (1757–1827). As various scholars have argued, Blake, like Swedenborg, saw the sexual union of man and woman as a means of restoring the androgynous state of unfallen man in Paradise. "Sexual love is sacramental to Blake. . . . In the sexual union, the divine incarnation and the subsequent raising of the human to become regenerated spirit is mirrored and repeated."[104]

Unlike Swedenborg, however, Blake was also quite critical of the dominant social, political, and religious institutions around him, which he saw as repressive and exploitative; he made a clear link between political and sexual repression, both of which are embodied in the oppressive system of forced marriage (the "marriage hearse," as he dubs it): "the paradigmatic form of oppression is sexual, and marriage out of necessity is the primary form that such sexual oppression takes."[105] Conversely, Blake also linked social and political liberation to sexual liberation, that is, to a total freedom of the human being in its physical as well as social aspects. As Morton Paley put it, "Blake envisions, not revolution *and* sexual freedom, but a revolution which is libidinal in nature."[106] This vision of sexual freedom appears in much of Blake's work, such as the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* but achieves one of its clearest expressions in *America* (1793). Here Orc's liberation of the thirteen colonies is described as a defeat of both religious tyranny and of sexual repression, and the triumph over the sexual bondage of religion becomes a kind of millennial event:

> The doors of marriage are open, and the Priests in rustling scales
> Rush into reptile coverts, hiding from the fires of Orc,
> That play around the golden roofs in wreaths of fierce desire,
> Leaving the females naked and glowing with the lusts of youth
> For the female spirits of the dead pining in bonds of religion;
> Run from their fetters reddening, & in long drawn arches sitting:
> They feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of ancient times,
> Over their pale limbs as a vine when the tender grape appears.[107]

As we will see throughout the following chapters, this link between sexual liberation and political liberation is one of the most recurring themes in the history of sex magic in the West.

CONCLUSIONS: THE GREAT SECRET AND THE GREAT AGENT

> Love is one of the mythological images of the Great Secret and the Great Agent, a void and a plentitude, a shaft and a wound.
> ELIPHAS LÉVI, *Transcendental Magic*

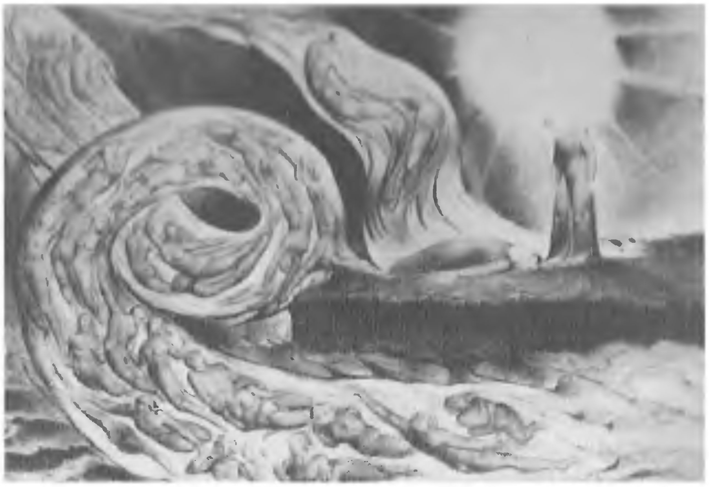


Figure 4. William Blake, "Whirlwind of Lovers," from Blake's illustrations to Dante's *Inferno.*

> The battle will rage most fiercely around the question of sex.
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*

In sum, the origins of modern sexual magic flow out of two very different currents in the Western religious imagination. The first is the largely fantastic, but remarkably enduring, nightmare of sexual license and black magic that was associated with virtually every heretical group from the Bacchae down to the witches. For the most part, the charges of sexual licentiousness brought against them were the mimetic projections of the dominant order's own fantasies, fears, and desires, now deflected onto the mirror of these marginalized groups. But more importantly, these fantasies tended to center around specific fears of *social and political subversion.* Many of these groups, such as the Gnostics, Bogomils, and Cathars, *did* in fact seek some form of liberation from the existing social order through their sexual practices. Ironically, like the early Christians, these groups were usually highly ascetic, at times even antisexual. And yet they were attacked as dangerously subversive, not because of what they were actually doing—namely, challenging the dominant systems of marriage and religious authority—but instead for the imaginary crimes of sexual license and black magic. As we see in popular novels like *The DaVinci Code,* this highly imaginative narrative is still very much with us today. Brown's story once again revives the image of ancient groups of Gnostics performing secret sexual rites, even in the face of ongoing persecution from the Catholic Church. Indeed, Brown's description of the secret Gnostic rites seems to be taken directly out of Epiphanius and other early Christian accounts:

> On a low, ornate altar in the center of the circle lay a man. He was naked, positioned on his back, and wearing a black mask. . . . Straddling her grandfather was a naked woman wearing a white mask, her luxuriant silver hair flowing out behind it. . . . [S]he was gyrating in rhythm to the chanting. . . . The chanting rose to a fever pitch. The circle of participants seemed almost to be singing now, the noise rising in crescendo to a frenzy. With a sudden roar, the entire room seemed to erupt in climax.[108]

While these sorts of accounts are largely fanciful, the second current feeding into modern sexual magic is one that can more easily be documented historically. This is a very old tradition running throughout Western esotericism, from ancient Greek magic through Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Renaissance alchemy, and early modern mystics like Swedenborg. In all of these traditions, there is a close connection between spiritual power and sexual union; but in none of them have we seen any trace of orgiastic behavior, immorality, black magic, or the explicit use of sexual intercourse as a means of achieving magical effects. Each of these traditions was in some sense seeking *liberation or freedom*—but typically a kind of spiritual freedom rather than a form of moral, social, or political freedom.

In any case, by the nineteenth century, these two currents had come increasingly to merge and blend together, forming a rich, complex, and deeply ambivalent vision of sex and magic in the Western imagination. As Eliphas Lévi concluded in his monumental study of magic, love is itself the image of the Great Secret and the Great Agent, "a shaft and a wound." Sexual love was thus imbued with an awesome but terrifying aura of power, as a force that could be wielded by the trained magician, but one that could all too easily lead one down the dark path to moral ruin, depravity, and bondage to Satan. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that these various, increasingly mingled beliefs and traditions would help give rise in the mid-nineteenth century to a well-developed and sophisticated system of sexual magic. But in order to understand this new form of *magia sexualis* in the modern era, we will also need to look closely at the shifting attitudes toward the body, sex, and marriage in European and American society over the last two hundred years.

2 Sex Power Is God Power

Paschal Beverly Randolph and the Birth of Sex Magic in Victorian America

> [T]rue sex power is God power.
>
> P. B. RANDOLPH, *The Ansairetic Mystery: A New Revelation Concerning Sex!*

> The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful or dangerous, precious or formidable. . . . [T]he progressive formation (and also the transformations) of the "interplay of truth and sex" was bequeathed to us by the nineteenth century.
>
> MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1

While the general association between sex, magic, and liberation has a long history in the Western religious imagination, the practice of sexual magic as a specific, detailed technique appears to be a relatively recent invention. Even if there are traces of erotic magic and ritual intercourse in medieval Kabbalah, Renaissance magic, or the works of Swedenborg, the more developed art of *magia sexualis* is to a large degree a product of the modern era. And it is closely related to shifting attitudes toward sex, love, and marriage in the last two hundred years.

Arguably the most important figure in the rise of modern sexual magic is the fascinating, enigmatic but today generally unknown figure of Paschal Beverly Randolph. As Joscelyn Godwin observes, "The most signal contribution of Randolph to occultism concerns sex."[1] Not only was Randolph a specialist in the cure of sexual dysfunctions, but he also developed an elaborate technique of sexual magic that he claimed could achieve all manner of both this-worldly and otherworldly goals, with the power to bring material wealth and happiness as well as profound spiritual realization. Ultimately, Randolph even claimed for sexual magic the power to solve all social ills and so lead the way to an ideal, harmonious, perhaps even millennial new world.

Randolph's teachings were also to have a tremendous influence on a wide array of later occult movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

Figure 5. Paschal Beverly Randolph. From John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), cover.

inspiring a host of new magical groups from the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and the Ordo Templi Orientis to the various forms of sex magic now being sold on Amazon.com. Yet remarkably, despite his historical importance and lasting impact, Randolph has been largely neglected by contemporary scholarship. Apart from the excellent recent biography by John Patrick Deveney and the useful discussion in Godwin's work, there is virtually no critical scholarship on Randolph or his sexual magic.[2] Most leading scholars of Western esotericism and the New Age, such as Wouter Haanegraff and Antoine Faivre give this "neglected pioneer of American occultism" only the briefest mention.[3] And even Deveney's fine work does little to situate Randolph within the longer history of sexual magic.

In this chapter, I will explore Randolph's intriguing life and his original system of sexual magic, or "affectional alchemy." Randolph's writings on sexual magic, I will argue, need to be understood within the context of the larger social and sexual culture of mid-nineteenth century America, and particularly in light of the various forms of *scientia sexualis* during this period. Far from a period of repression and silence, the twentieth century in fact witnessed the rise of a new interest in—indeed, obsession with—sexuality in both scientific and popular discourse. The term *sexuality* is itself a product of this period, entering for the first time into the English vocabulary through an 1892 translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's classic medical-scientific work *Psychopathia Sexualis.*[4] And increasingly throughout this period, sexuality was seen to be the innermost essence of the self and the key to unlocking the mysteries of the human being. As Jennifer Terry observes, "What is striking about the modern scientific study of sexuality is its palpable investment in unearthing . . . secrets of the self."[5] As we see throughout both scientific and popular books of the mid-nineteenth century, sex was regarded as at once the most powerful and potentially most dangerous force in human life, a sacred power that was crucial to happiness and well-being, but one that could easily be abused and lead to moral or social ruin.[6]

Randolph not only reflects, but in fact epitomizes and exaggerates these claims about the tremendous power and potential evils of sex. Indeed, he developed his own "science" of sexual magic, in which the moment of orgasm becomes the ultimate spiritual power with the potential to attain virtually any desired end, from health and longevity to mystical insight. Like most of his contemporaries in Victorian America, Randolph also insists that sexual magic should be practiced solely within the sacred precincts of marriage, and he warns even more sternly than most nineteenth-century authors of the terrible dangers that ensue if the sexual act is misused. At the same time, however, Randolph was also rather ahead of his time in many ways, particularly in his attitudes toward society, race, and women. Not only was he an outspoken abolitionist and a founder of the National Equal Rights League, but he was also a defender of women's rights with a utopian vision of a genuinely free and equal society. And for Randolph, healthy, mutual, and sacralized sex was a key part of achieving this social vision.

SPIRITUALISTS AND SEXUAL RADICALS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

> Sexual matters are so thoroughly interwoven with the highest destinies of the human race, physically, mentally, spiritually, there is scarcely any concern of higher import . . . than that assigned to the genital organs. No function more deeply concerns the healthiness of the body, the clearness and brilliancy of the intellect.
> HENRY GUERNSEY, *Plain Talk on Avoided Subjects*

While most of us today typically think of the nineteenth century as a period of general silence and Victorian prudery on the topic of sex, it appears to have been quite the opposite. Indeed, it witnessed an unprecedented explosion of discourse about sex, with the birth of a whole medical and popular literature on the topics of love and marriage: "sexuality, in spite of pretensions about its unspeakability," expanded rapidly during this period, "saturating the discursive and social relations of modern societies. . . . [S]exuality became . . . a great surface network through which power and a range of new knowledges circulated."[7] Not only do we see a proliferation of literature on marriage, reproduction, and child-rearing, but we also find a whole new *scientia sexualis* dedicated to the scrutiny, classification, and categorization of all varieties of sexual behavior in both their "healthy" and "pathological forms." Krafft-Ebing's widely read *Psychopathia Sexualis* was just one of a large body of new scientific literature dedicated to the careful scrutiny of every imaginable deviation from "normal" sex, that is, sex between married heterosexual couples with the intention of producing children and a family: "This was in fact a science made up of evasions since . . . it concerned itself primarily with aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities, pathological abatements and morbid aggravations. . . . [I]t declared the furtive customs of the timid, the most solitary of petty manias, dangerous for the whole society."[8]

An important part of the reason for this new interest in sex, Foucault suggests, was the larger concern with the regulation of rapidly growing populations during the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of modern capitalism. Healthy, productive heterosexual intercourse, regulated by law and sanctified by marriage, was critical to the growth of a healthy, productive social body. The new sciences of sexuality were thus part of a broader form of "bio-power"—a form of power working through new modes of scientific and medical knowledge, exercised upon the body, in order to ensure the health of the State: "This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies in the machinery of production and adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes."[9]

This emphasis on the central power of sex would soon also be picked up and exploited by the more progressive religious movements of the nineteenth century, and above all by spiritualists like Randolph. At the same time, the spiritualists would often give sex a rather different meaning, one that in some cases worked to subvert and resist the bio-power of the dominant social order.

The Danger and the Power of Sex in the Victorian American Imagination

> Sexual feelings exercise a directive power over most of the activities of life—moulding our religion, our literature, our art, our etiquette.
> JAMES FOSTER, *The Sexual Instinct*

One of the most recurring themes in nineteenth-century American discourse is the profoundly ambivalent nature of the sexual instinct, its power for both tremendous good and terrible evil. As Steven Seidman observes, Victorian American authors did not simply "shroud sex in a veil of silence"; on the contrary, "they consistently, perhaps obsessively, acknowledged its presence and power. It was precisely because sex was elevated to a force of such consequential proportions that they felt compelled to detail its proper use and to describe the evils that accompany its misuse."[10] On the one side, sexual love within the sacred bonds of marriage was regarded as one of the most perfect experiences available in this world, an earthly taste of the pure love in heaven. As O. S. Fowler put it in *Love and Parentage* (1850), "This perfect oneness of feeling and confluence of soul; the complete solution of every feeling and faculty of the other, and longing for its attendant spiritual communion, alone constitutes true marriage."[11] Similarly, as John Cowen wrote in 1871, "Perfect sexual love comes only of a perfect union—a union of resemblance of mind, soul and body."[12]

Conversely, if sexual love was a power of such tremendous spiritual potential, it was also one that could very easily be abused, perverted, and turned into the most dangerous source of evil. Throughout the second half the nineteenth century, doctors, scientists, and popular authors like R. T. Trall in his *Sexual Physiology and Hygiene* (1866) warned of the demoralizing results of abnormal sexuality and the "prevalence of vice, crime, disease and degradation resulting from perverted amativeness."[13] While they insisted that "normal" heterosexual intercourse within the bounds of marriage was a good, healthy, and spiritually uplifting thing, they also warned that too much sex—which meant, primarily, too much loss of the vital essence, the male sexual fluid—and above all any kind of "abnormal," nonprocreative sexual activity would only lead to physical, psychological, and moral ruin: As William Acton put it in 1865, "Too frequent emission of the life-giving fluid, and too frequent sexual excitation of the nervous system is . . . in itself most destructive."[14] Even more sternly, Sylvester Graham warned that "grave misfortunes—from impotence to organic disease, insanity and suicide—came to individuals who indulged excessively or pursued sensual pleasure as an end in itself."[15]

Above all, Victorian authors typically singled out masturbation and intercourse outside the bounds of marriage as the most dangerous, morally ruinous, and socially destructive of acts—primarily because they placed hedonistic self-pleasure over the health and welfare of the nuclear family and of society as a whole: "To the Victorians, fornication exhibited the same egoistic and hedonistic qualities as in masturbation . . . it has the additional risk of bringing disease and lust into the pure sphere of the family."[16] In sum, the Victorian view of sex was a powerful but tumultuous combination of sacred reverence and terrible fear; yet if this power of sexuality could be properly controlled and sacralized, it could lead the way to a more spiritual and civilized society: "Victorians imagined a drama of an omnipresent powerful sex drive propelled toward pleasure but susceptible to the dangers of excess and ruin. Self-control and the spiritualization of desire would make possible an autonomous self and civilized society."[17]

Spiritualism and Free Love in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America

> Religious love is the very near neighbor to sexual love, and they always get mixed in the intimacies and social excitements of Revivals. The next thing a man wants, after he has found the salvation of his soul, is to find his Eve in Paradise.
>
> JOHN HUMPHREY NOYES

> The restoration of true relations between the sexes is a matter second only in importance to the reconciliation of man to God.
>
> *First Annual Report of the Oneida Association*

Some of the most outspoken and innovative authors on sexuality came from the various new religious movements that proliferated throughout nineteenth-century America. As various authors have observed, the period between the War of 1812 and the Civil War was one of profound transformation on all levels of American society: "It was the age of 'Jacksonian Democracy,' when the common man came into his own in politics; . . . of 'Manifest Destiny,' when the nation surged across the continent to the Pacific; and of 'Freedom's Ferment' when Americans, believing that perfection could be achieved on earth, threw themselves into an incredible range of benevolent and reform activities."[18] This new optimism would in turn give birth to a wide range of utopian and millenarian communities seeking to create an ideal society here on earth.

At the same time, however, this period also witnessed significant transformations in gender roles and in the relations between men and women.

As Louis Kern observes in his study of nineteenth-century sexuality and new religions, "the roles of middle class men and women were increasingly differentiated, as industrialization drew male attention to the affairs of the marketplace, while married women's work remained centered in the home. The ideological formulation of this change, the 'cult of domesticity,' and the doctrine of separate 'spheres' of male and female competence, served to codify sex-role assumptions."[19] These increasingly differentiated and rigidly defined gender roles, however, would also meet with some resistance and would in turn give birth to a variety of new religious movements seeking alternatives to this narrowly defined ideal of monogamy and structured gender roles. Particularly in the northeastern United States and above all in the "burned-over district" of New York State, a wide range of new utopian and millenarian groups like the Shakers and Mormons began to appear, and many of them would experiment with a variety of alternative sexual and gender relations in the hope of finding some liberation from mainstream society. Thus, "the early Mormons advocated polygamy; the Shakers preached radical celibacy; the Oneidans enjoyed complex marriage; and . . . Spiritualism offered liberation in temporal as well as ethereal spheres."[20]

One of the most controversial of these movements was the Oneida community founded by John Humphrey Noyes in New York State in 1848. Indeed, the new system of sexual relations introduced at Oneida would make Noyes one of the most infamous characters of the nineteenth century and place him at the center of the "Free Love" scandals of the day. Noyes himself, however, preferred not the phrase "free love" but rather "complex marriage," which involved the frequent exchange of sexual partners, though with the strict provisions that any exclusive emotional attachments should be dissolved and that males should practice a form of voluntary birth control through continence. This system was by no means simple libertinism, as many of its critics supposed; rather, it meant there should be "no coercion in sexual relations, whether from legally prescribed duties of marriage or from the unrestricted urgings of libido."[21] Not surprisingly, Noyes's community was perceived as a dangerous threat by many in the surrounding society and was a regular target of moral outrage because of its alleged debaucheries. John W. Mears of Hamilton College, for example, launched a major campaign against them in the 1870s, as did New York congressman Anthony Comstock, who branded the group "vicious and obscene." Finally in 1879, owing to both internal and external pressures, the community abandoned the practice of complex marriage and in 1881 was dissolved as a religious organization.[22]

However, one of the most important and controversial forces in this search for alternative modes of sex and marriage was the Spiritualist movement. A diverse and loosely organized movement, Spiritualism flourished in the mid-nineteenth century, in part through the inspiration of otherworldly prophets like Emanuel Swedenborg and in part through the new interest in the occult, séances, and mediumship that swept the northeastern United States. The key moment in the rise of Spiritualism is usually traced to the famous case of the young Fox sisters in Hydesville, New York, who began to receive mysterious rappings from an unseen being (who later was said to have been the spirit of a murdered peddler). But Spiritualism would soon evolve into elaborate new philosophical and metaphysical systems such as the "harmonial philosophy" of the great Spiritualist and social reformer Andrew Jackson Davis. Challenging the authority of mainstream Christian churches and offering the potential for spiritual insight to more or less any man or woman, regardless of class or wealth, Spiritualism was also often tied to social and racial reform movements. As Anne Braude has argued, the Spiritualists were often "radical spirits" who used their claim to otherworldly knowledge as a means to critique the existing social order and gender relations. Not surprisingly, many of the Spiritualists were also actively involved in abolition movements and the early women's rights movements in nineteenth-century America.[23]

A key part of this social radicalism was, in many cases, a form of sexual radicalism and an attempt to imagine alternative marital relations. Central to many Spiritualist movements—and a large cause for the controversy that often followed them—were the principles of "free love." According to Henry C. Wright's *Marriage and Parentage*, which was publicized by Spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis, the principles of free love include "the priority of female control in the sexual and generative relations, the irrelevancy of positive law to the attractions, the justification of seminal expenditure only for reproduction and the attractional definition of marriage, which held that those who were joined by transcendental affinities were automatically and truly mated and that those who were not were divorced, regardless of legalities."[24] Davis would take these ideas further in his own harmonial philosophy and his ideal of "Spiritual affinity"—namely, the belief that certain men and women have an attraction for one another based not on arbitrary social or marital arrangements but on a deep complementarity of their spiritual auras. This spiritual affinity "superseded the bond of legal marriage" and so offered an escape from the "brutality and dullness of marriage."[25]

In sum, there was a natural affinity between Spiritualism and other powerful social reforms of the nineteenth century, above all, feminism and the doctrine of free love. Each of these movements in one way or another challenged the authority of the dominant religious, patriarchal, and social order and offered a powerful alternative to the existing status quo. And each emerged in the same general historical and geographic area, lending mutual support to one another as a widespread social force of transformation that paralleled, yet challenged, the incredible economic transformations of the Industrial Revolution: "Such faith in the new trinity of salvation suggests that reformers of the new industrial age sought a revolution in the humanistic realm to match the revolution . . . in the material realm."[26]

Not surprisingly, this confluence of the radical forces of spiritualism, feminism, and free love generated a certain amount of backlash and controversy in mainstream Victorian American society. Thus the *New York Times* attacked free love as nothing less than a systematic, subversive movement and dedicated some effort in the mid-1850s to protest against it.[27] Paschal Beverly Randolph grew up in the very midst of these new Spiritualist, feminist, and sexual revolutions, and he would in his own life and writings reflect both the utopian hope for social transformation and the often intense controversies over the dangers of free love.

"P. B. RANDOLPH, HIS CURIOUS LIFE, WORKS AND CAREER"

> I have loved not wisely but too muchly. . . . For this I inherited bias and have suffered and paid extremely dear. Yet were my career to be run again I would not have it different.
>
> P. B. RANDOLPH, *The "Learned Pundit" and "Man with Two Souls"*

Born in 1825 to a wealthy Virginian father and a slave from Madagascar, Paschal Beverly Randolph described himself as a "man with two souls." A poor, self-taught free black raised in the slums of New York, Randolph was always poor and something of a nomad. After being orphaned at age seven, he ran away from his foster parents as a teenager in order to explore a wide range of new religious movements and travel the world. By the 1850s Randolph had earned a reputation as a trance speaker and medium, particularly for the more "reform-minded spirits." In 1853, he claimed to have received a series of messages from the spiritual realm—communications from the Angel Mother, then from Zoroaster, and later from Blaise Pascal and a being named "Eben el Teleki." Beginning in 1857, Randolph left the United States to travel widely abroad, exploring not only Europe but also Egypt, Asia Minor, and Palestine. Along the way he claimed to have encountered a variety of sages and holy men, including Egyptian miracle workers and Indian Brahmins, who taught him the inner secrets of magic.

Upon his return to the United States, Randolph would also become increasingly politically active, above all in the tumultuous years before and during the Civil War. Like many Spiritualists, he was an outspoken leader in the abolitionist movement and the debate over the enlistment of black soldiers into the Union army; yet Randolph's own involvement in these racial debates was particularly striking and intense owing to his own complex mixed race background. [28] Thus, in October 1864, he attended the National Convention of Colored Men as one of New York City's delegates, where he delivered a powerful and often-cited speech on October 6, championing the black cause and the future of colored people in America:

> Here we are met, not to hear each other talk, not to mourn over the terrible shadows of the past; but we are here to prove our right to manhood and justice and to maintain these rights, not by force of mere appeal, . . . but by the divine right of brains, of will, of true patriotism, of manhood, of womanhood, of all that is great and noble and worth striving for in human character. We are here to ring the bells at the door of the world; proclaiming to the nations, to the white man in his palace, the slave in his hut, kings on their thrones, and to the whole broad universe, that WE ARE COMING UP.[29]

Randolph was also a key figure in the foundation of the National Equal Rights League, whose goal was, in sum, to "obtain by appeals to the minds and conscience of the American people . . . a recognition of the rights of the colored people of the nation as American citizens."[30]

Although his views changed over time, Randolph was initially a strong supporter of the rights of blacks to remain on American soil. Rejecting various proposals to displace American blacks to some colony in Africa or South America, he argued strongly for their rights to live freely in the United States. For "here were we born, for this country and our brothers have fought, and here we hope to remain in the full enjoyment of enfranchised manhood, and its dignities."[31] In September 1866, the Southern loyalists convened in Philadelphia to support the republican cause, to seek recognition for their loyalty and to urge extending the ballot to the "loyal Negro." Randolph went there to deliver a fiery and famous speech that was widely reproduced throughout the newspapers of the day:

> I am not P. B. Randolph; I am the voice of God crying, "Hold! Hold!" to the nation in its mad career! The lips of the struggling millions of the disenfranchised demanding Justice in the name of Truth—a Peter the Hermit, preaching a new crusade against Wrong—the Genius of Progress appealing for schools; a pleader for the people . . . mechanic for the redemption of the world.[32]

As we will see below, this call for freedom and reform is a theme that runs throughout Randolph's work, particularly in his writings on sexual magic and relations between the sexes.

In addition to his work as a medium, seryer, and social activist, Randolph hoped to found a new religious order dedicated to the spiritual regeneration of humanity, which he called the Brotherhood of Eulis. Officially founded in 1874, the brotherhood drew its name from *eolis,* which in turn derives from the Greek *eos,* for the dawn, the gate of light; Randolph would also claim that the Eleusinian mysteries were themselves part of this Eulian tradition. Although he had been involved with and influenced by European Rosicrucian traditions, Randolph claimed that his brotherhood was in fact a deeper, more profound mystery than the Rosicrucian order, which was only the outer door to the inner sanctum of Eulis.[33] For the inner secrets of Eulis, we will see, centered in large part around the rites of sexual magic.

Tragically, Randolph would suffer a series of personal misfortunes in his later years. After falling from an elevated train in 1873, he was left a paralyzed invalid; increasingly intoxicated and suspicious that his wife had betrayed him, he committed suicide in 1875.

The Science of Sexual Magic

> Magic is a science. It is the only science which occupies itself, theoretically and practically, with the highest forces of nature, which are occult.
> PASCHAL BEVERLY RANDOLPH, *Magia Sexualis*

> The Eleusinian Philosophers (with whom Jesus is reputed to have studied) were philosophers of Sex; and the Eleusinian Mysteries were mysteries thereof.
> RANDOLPH, *Eulis!*

Arguably the most important contribution Randolph made to modern esotericism was his system of magical eroticism, or affectional alchemy. In sexual love, Randolph saw nothing less than "the greatest hope for the regeneration of the world, the key to personal fulfillment as well as social transformation and the basis of a non-repressive civilization."[34] As Randolph states repeatedly throughout his later work, sexual love is the most profound, powerful force in human life, with untold potential for both good and evil:

> LOVE LIETH AT THE FOUNDATION . . . and Love is convertibly passion, enthusiasm affection heat, fire, SOUL, God. . . . The nuptive moment, the instant wherein the germs of a possible new being are lodged . . . is the most solemn, serious, powerful and energetic moment he can ever know on earth.[35]

Randolph's interest in sex was apparent even from his early years, when he began to present himself not just as a trance speaker and clairvoyant, but also as a "doctor" and spiritual physician. And his primary specialty was the healing of sexual ills. In 1854, he claimed to have cured a sick friend of problems resulting from the loss of his "vital forces," meaning the loss of his vitality caused by masturbation or sexual excess. Henceforth, the curing of sexual problems became his lifelong work. As Deveney observes, Randolph clearly reflects widespread nineteenth-century beliefs about masturbation and the loss of vital energy and was thus part of a popular fringe of medicine aimed at replenishing vital forces lost during sexual excess.

However, according to Randolph's own account, his first real initiation into the mysteries of sexual magic occurred during his travels through the Middle East. In fact, he claims to have derived much of his knowledge from his experiences in the areas of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, where he met a dark Arab maiden who first revealed to him the spiritual mysteries of love; afterward, he would learn more through his interactions with a group of fakirs, or Sufis, who initiated him into a variety of occult and alchemical arts:

> One night—it was in far-off Jerusalem or Bethlehem, I really forget which—I made love to . . . a dusky maiden of Arabic blood. I of her and that experience learned . . . the fundamental principle of the White Magic of Love; subsequently I became affiliated with some dervishes and fakirs by whom . . . I found the road to other knowledges. . . . I became practically . . . a mystic and in time chief of the lofty brethren . . . discovering the ELIXIR OF LIFE, the universal Solvent . . . and the philosopher's stone.[36]

It is not entirely clear who this mysterious group of dervishes and fakirs may have been, and Randolph gives few clues. Elsewhere, in his *New Mola* (1873), he announced that he would reveal the secrets of a priesthood of Syria called the Ansaireh, which may be a reference to these fakirs. Deveney speculates that Randolph's fakirs may in fact have been a radical Shi'ite mystical order known as the Nusa'iri, or Ansairi, a group long persecuted by orthodox Islam because of their alleged Gnostic sexual rituals and "antinomian, libertine" practice.[37] Randolph himself does refer to the mysteries of the Ansairi and other Eastern masters among the "Arabs, Turks, Syrians, Armenians and Egyptians" in his later works, particularly in his *Ansairetic Mystery: A New Revelation Concerning Sex!* (1873). However, it remains unclear whether he actually had contact with such groups or merely picked up his knowledge secondhand through the accounts of Orientalist scholars of the day.[38]

Whatever his primary inspiration, Randolph began to teach a form of sexual magic that would have a profound impact on much of later Western esotericism. Indeed, he would reveal it as the innermost secret of his Brotherhood of Eulis, a secret that goes back before Christ and all the great sages of history:

> Through the Night of time the lamp of EULIS has lighted our path and enabled obscure brethren to illuminate the world. Before Pythagoras, Plato, Hermes and Budha, *we were!* And when their systems shall topple into dust, we will flourish in immortal youth, because we drink of life at its holy fountain, and restored, pure, healthful, and normal sex with its uses to and with us means Restoration, Strength, Ascension. . . . Up to the publications hereof on this continent we were indeed secret. . . . But the time has come to spread the new doctrines because the age is ripe.[39]

For Randolph, the sexual instinct is the most fundamental force in the universe, for it is the natural attraction between positive and negative, active and passive forces in the universe. Borrowing the language of "magnetic attraction" (probably drawn from Franz Anton Mesmer and his students),[40] Randolph sees the male and female as complementary electromagnetic forces: on the physical plane, the male genitals are positive and the female genitals are negative; conversely, on the mental plane, the female mind is positive and the male negative. Hence the two have an innate attraction that is at once physical and spiritual:

> In effect, the entire universe, all living beings, without the least exception, are ruled by the principle of two contrary forces, exercising, one on the other, a power of inescapable attraction. One calls the forces positive and negative, and one rediscovers them in good and bad, emission and reception, life and death, idea and action, man and woman (positive and negative magnetic poles) in the material plane and, conversely, the woman (active pole) and man (negative pole) in the mental plane. In the science of the mysteries . . . just as in nature, the female attracts the male. . . . Therefore, while the phallus of the man is positively polarized and the kteis of the woman is negatively polarized, the head of the man . . . is, to the contrary, negative and magnetic for rapport with the head of the woman which is positive and electric.[41]

Because sexual attraction is the most fundamental force in nature, the experience of orgasm is the critical moment in human consciousness and the key to magical power. It is the moment when the soul is opened up to the energies of the cosmos and new life is infused from the spiritual realm into the material: "at the instant of intense mutual orgasm the souls of the partners are opened to the powers of the cosmos and anything then truly willed is accomplished."[42] As such, the experience of sexual climax has the potential to lead the soul either upward or downward, to higher states of spiritual transcendence or to lower depraved states of corruption:

> The moment when a man discharges his seed—his essential self—into a . . . womb is the most solemn, energetic and powerful moment he can ever know on earth; if under the influence of mere lust it be done, the discharge is suicidal. . . . At the moment his seminal glands open, his nostrils expand, and while the seed is going from his soul to her womb he breathes one of two atmospheres, either fetid damnation from the border spaces or Divine Energy from heavens. Whatsoever he shall truly will and internally pray for when Love . . . is in the ascendant, that moment the prayer's response comes down.[43]

The power of sex, then, can be deployed for a wide range of both spiritual and material ends. If one can harness the creative energy aroused by sexual contact, he can attain not only spiritual insight but also the mundane goals of physical health, financial success, or the regained passions of a straying lover. According to Randolph, the major uses of sex magic are:

> I. For purposes of increasing the brain and body power of an unborn child, II. Influencing one's wife or husband and magnetically controlling them, III. regaining youthful beauty, energy, vivacity. . . . IV. prolonging the life of either the subject or actor or either at will, V. attainment of Supreme white magic of will, affection or Love, VI. For the furtherance of financial interests, schemes, lotteries, etc. VII. The attainment of the loftiest insight possible to the earthly soul.[44]

Elsewhere, Randolph lists over a hundred uses for sexual magic, which include everything from marital bliss and success in business to longevity and spiritual insight into higher realms:

> 3. Frustrating bad plans of others, when such will prove a benefit
> 4. The precise opposite—to assist others by exertion of the Aethic force of the soul . . .
> 9. Relating to money dealings, losses, gains and to forecast them
> 10. The grand secret of domestic happiness, the law of marital discord discovered and its most effectual antidotes shown
> 11. to render a false husband, lover or wife sexively cold to others
> 12. Where persons are of unloving natures, to change it by attracting love energy from the earth and matter by self action . . .
> 19. To correct a Physiological failure and source of trouble in husbands . . .
> 23. To silently induce the female world to assist one's mental purposes . . .
> 28. To secretly penetrate others' designs (Machiavelli's power) . . .
> 30. The power of influencing others, solely financially . . .

34. To derange the love relations of those not one's lover . . .
36–7–8. To magnetically reclaim a straying lover, wife or husband . . .
40. The power of preparing amulets, and charging them with Aethae. . . .
47. To reconstruct a shaking love by secretly generating jealous passional affection . . .
68. To attain the road leading to the ineffable Beyond (Aethervoyance) . . .
70. To vitalize medicines, foods, drinks, clothing with a specific mission (the grand Life Secret) . . .
72. The power of resisting disease and death by will alone . . .
103. To become immersed in business spheres, to reliably direct others . . .
112. The grand secret of life prolongation.[45]

In keeping with the nineteenth-century interest in *scientia sexualis* as the key to the inner secrets of the self, Randolph refers to his sexual magic as a "science," in both the theoretical and practical sense of the term. His explanation of sexual magic is cast in fairly technical medical and scientific terms. Thus he posits the existence of a nervous fluid that is the basis of all mental and spiritual life in the organism. This fluid is distilled by the sexual glands and secreted as a substance called "Physical Love." When man and woman unite in full, mutually satisfying intercourse, this Physical Love fluid becomes part of the future child; within the bodies of the man and woman themselves, it is transmuted into an "aeroform," a kind of physical and spiritual transfusion that replenishes the health of the body and mind alike:

> The love organs perform the highest office in the spiritual, but not the physical, economy; for they extract from the system and condense . . . the fluid white fire, which when set open in love's embrace, even here below, rushes like a whirlwind through man, plunges soul and body in a baptism of delight as it sweeps along the nerves, giving a foretaste of heaven—the most exquisite rapture he is capable of enduring.[46]

Conversely, sexual abuse, whether through masturbation or excessive intercourse, has the opposite effect, draining the body of its vital energy and sapping the organism.

In addition to this quasi-medical description of sexual magic, Randolph also makes frequent use of the language of electricity and magnetism. Not only does he conceive of the entire universe in terms of a polarization between positive and negative energies, but he describes the human body as being permeated and infused by a kind of "body electric," which consists of ethereal, electrical organs corresponding to each of our mundane physical organs: "The body of man is a mere conglomerate of earths and metals, gases and fluids wholly material, but penetrated . . . in every atom by imponderable elements essentially electric in their nature. Thus beneath and lining our eyes are ethereal organs corresponding thereto; beneath our limbs, heart, lungs, brain . . . are corresponding electric organs and the totality of these constitutes the ethereal, spiritual, death-proof man."[47] As such, the key to magical power lies in the manipulation of these electrical forces and the laws of magnetic attraction.

However, perhaps the most striking feature of Randolph's sexual magic is his insistence that both male and female partners must have an active role in the process. In fact, he places great emphasis on the importance of orgasm for both man and woman—ideally a simultaneous orgasm—in order for the magical operation to succeed: "For the prayer to be effective the paroxysm of both is necessary. . . . [T]he woman's orgasms should coincide with the man's emission, for only in this way will the magic be fulfilled."[48] For the resulting pleasure that both partners feel in this union is nothing less than the overflowing joy of the divine emanating from above like the breath of God himself:

> When pleasure results from the meeting of the electric currents of the male with the magnetic flow of the female, in the nerves of each, as in the touch of loving lips, the two currents spread out into waves, which flow all over the nervous network of both. . . . [T]he joy . . . is diffused over both beings and each is based in the celestial and divine aura—the breath of God, suffusing both bodies, refreshing both souls![49]

We should note here, however, that Randolph's secrets of sexual magic did not come without a certain price. He did, after all, have to make a living and so charged fees (sometimes hefty) for his various sexual magical lessons, formulas, and tonics. As he explained,

> [I]n no case will I dispose of my formulas for cerebral, nervous and sexual tonics, invigorants and restoratives unless paid of the same, the prices for any one of which, with license to manufacture, is $250 in gold for either the first four, and $450 and $500 gold coin for either of the remaining three . . . $2000 for all seven.[50]
>
> [B]ut a limited number will be taught the whole Science, to become teachers, the fee for which is $250 in fold. . . . Other points of the system will be taught at $10 per lesson; also the normal sexual secret of magnetic sex-power for either gender, the fee for which is $25 . . . that being the Society's only terms.[51]

In this respect, Randolph perhaps foresaw the growing commercialization and commodification of sexual magic that we find in contemporary American culture (see chapter 8). But this is perhaps a small price to pay when one considers the immense worldly and otherworldly benefits promised to result from the science of sexual magic.

Free Love and Sexual Control: The "Conservative Character" of Randolph's Sex Magic

> Free-love, disguise it as you may, means sensual license, no more, no less; and wherever its doctrine prevail there will you find either a worn-out debauchee, a freedom-shrieking woman of faded charms, . . . or brainly men, actually heartless unemotive, spasmodically lecherous.
>
> P. B. RANDOLPH, *The "Learned Pundit"*

As we can see in the foregoing passages, Randolph's practice of sexual magic is anything but mere hedonistic license. Sex, for Randolph, is strictly for married couples united by the bond of love, and it must only be undertaken with the purest of intentions, safeguarded by strict moral and physical sanctions. Nonetheless, it is perhaps not entirely surprising that his writings on sexual magic would become the source of some scandal and controversy in mid-nineteenth-century American society. He would, in fact, be put on trial on the charge of disseminating dangerous "free love" literature and accused of spreading all manner of sexual indecency among the public. As it turns out, most of the accusations were fabricated by an ambitious and rather unscrupulous character who went by various names, such as W. T. French, W. Bay French, and W. French Bay, and who hoped to acquire Randolph's profitable copyrights and manuscripts. Thus, in 1872, French accused Randolph of purveying obscene materials, specifically free love literature, which led to Randolph's arrest and brief imprisonment on February 24, 1872. Although he was never proved guilty of any illegal activities, the incident left Randolph financially ruined and deeply in debt.

In response, the ever-resourceful Randolph published his own highly entertaining fictionalized account of the whole affair entitled *P. B. Randolph, The "Learned Pundit" and "Man with Two Souls": His Curious Life, Works and Career: The Great Free-Love Trial* (1872). In this account, Randolph is attacked ruthlessly by his prosecutor as the "most dangerous man and author on the soil of America"; indeed, if a follower of Randolph happens to get her clutches on you, "the game's up—and you are lost."[52] In his defense, however, Randolph strongly condemns the concept of free love (which he equates rather simplistically with unbridled sexual license and promiscuity):

> Whatever may be the practice of free-lovers, certain it is that the corner-stone of their edifice is that any man or woman is at perfect liberty to ask, receive, and grant, favors from or to any one whom fancy may take to. . . . In a state possibly existing in Heaven, such a doctrine might be understood and no harm come of it, but on the earth to-day—which . . . is barbaric, and the vast mass but little better than savages at heart—that doctrine won't work well, for where one person would understand and see it from the heavenly point of view, fifty millions would see, and *use it,* from a wholly earthly one. Now a relation subsisting between two persons cannot be love if it allows each the unlimited passional liberty which is the soul and essence of the free-love dogma![53]

Instead of "free love," Randolph argues strongly for the importance of marriage as a moral foundation for society, without which we would not even be rightly called human or civilized:

> Love of two, in honorable marriage, is the only true rule, and only insurance society has against anarchy for its own preservation. They who fight against that rule and *natural* law . . . are not truly human, but something much lower.[54]

In the end, Randolph takes a certain delight in poking fun at his prosecuting attorney, who is finally unable to prove anything more against Randolph than that he "encouraged women to think of themselves as equals to men."[55]

This basic conservatism in Randolph's view of sex is echoed throughout his work on sexual magic as well. While celebrating the tremendous power of sexual intercourse between married heterosexual couples, Randolph also agreed with most Victorian writers by strongly condemning nonreproductive sexual acts—and above all, masturbation. Like many nineteenth-century Americans, he had a central belief in the vital energy contained in the sexual fluids; hence any unnecessary waste through self-gratification was in his eyes a tragic loss of our most precious physical and spiritual essence: "'free love,' promiscuity, and *personal vice* are losing games . . . they are suicidal to the last degree. There is no act, not even excepting robbery and murder, that so effectually demoralizes the entire being, as does the vice alluded to. The curse of God rests upon it, and its penalties are too dreadful to contemplate."[56]

In fact, Randolph believed there to be a special sexual secretion common to both men and women, which he called the "Lymphication of Love." A colorless, viscid fluid, this lymph is present "only under the most fierce and intense amative passion in either man or woman."[57] So powerful is this secretion that the couple should only engage in intercourse when it is present, for it brings love and power to the child conceived; if it is not present, the couple should absolutely restrain themselves and avoid any sexual expenditure:

> [T]he IMPERATIVE LAW—the violation of which entails horror, crime, and suffering through at least a dozen lives—is: Absolute self-mastery . . . unless the presence of this divine fluid is God's permit for the holiest of all human enjoyments and duties.[58]

And should the precious fluid be lost through sexual vice, the worst of all physical, psychological, and spiritual ills is certain to follow, as "splendid people" are reduced to "driveling, soulless idiocy, wild mania or absolute dementia from sex perversions"; indeed, when this divine substance is wasted through masturbation or other nonreproductive acts,

> Soul itself is wasted, and Madness, with Horror at his gorgon side, waves his cruel baton, and another victim takes his or her place among the awful ranks of the Impotent, Barren or Insane. It is the loss of this through personal vice solitary, and from the reading of infernal books . . . that so many rush into bagnios and the madhouse.[59]

At the same time, Randolph also insists that sexual magic must be carefully guarded by strict moral and physical purity. He gives a series of rules that should be followed before one undertakes the potentially dangerous art of sexual magic. Most importantly, the act is only to be performed between a heterosexual married couple (which fundamentally excludes any form of prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, or masturbation); the act must be based on spiritual love, not carnal lust;[60] it must be motivated by a pure unselfish intention; it should involve some period of preparation, ideally celibacy beforehand lasting between ten and forty-one days; one must prepare the physical body with good hygiene and good food, avoiding grease, alcohol, and spices; both the man and woman should formulate their intention beforehand, but keep it very secret;[61] and finally, a mutual, ideally simultaneous orgasm is crucial to the optimal success of the operation. As Randolph repeatedly reaffirms, the act of sexual union and the moment of orgasm are the most powerful and profound in human life; if they are directed toward a higher spiritual end, they are the most profound source of White Magic. But if they are used carelessly or for selfish ends, they will lead to the most horrible psychological and spiritual destruction, to madness, criminality, and damnation:

> The instant that the semen of the man passes into the body of the woman who accepts it, is the instant of greatest fecundity, the greatest power, the greatest emotion of the life of man. If he is, however, under the influence

> of carnal passion, of bestial instinct, the man is suicide, lost, demoralized. To the woman, he will give disease and chaos, psychic and material. And the child he procreates will become an assassin, a mental cripple, a miserable being. To the contrary, if the union of the man with the woman is effected in the harmony of mutual love and, consequently, the ambient occult forces of the environment participate with joy in the solemn act, the man and the woman work to regenerate those forces and the fruit of their embrace is success. [62]

Thus it seems clear that Randolph's teachings on sexual love and magic are by no means some radical antisocial practice going against the grain of mainstream American society of the nineteenth century; on the contrary, they reflect and embody many of the basic sexual values of his day. As Godwin points out, Randolph's system is a far cry from the sexual techniques developed by many of the magicians we will meet in the following chapters: "Nothing could be further from the sexual magic later developed by the Ordo Templi Orientis, still less that of Aleister Crowley and his followers."[63] First, with his language of electrical charges and magnetic attraction between the sexes, Randolph reflects much of the nineteenth-century discourse current on the natural attraction between males and females; he clearly echoes, for example, Frederick Hollick's description of male-female attraction as a form of "Animal Magnetism" between positive and negative forces, mentioned above.[64] Still more importantly, however, Randolph also reflects Victorian attitudes toward love and sexuality within the sacred context of marriage. As we have seen above, the Victorians held a strong "spiritual ideal of love" based on the spiritual affinity between husband and wife in marriage; yet they also warned of the dangers of sexual desire, as a powerfully creative but potentially destructive force that had to be strictly controlled within the guarded strictures of marriage lest it degenerate into "excess and ruin."[65] Randolph, I would argue, took this Victorian view of sexual love to its furthest possible extreme, by celebrating the awesome magical power of sex while also warning of its potentially destructive and damning abuses.

At the same time, however, I would also suggest that Randolph was somewhat ahead of his time and foreshadowed some of the changing attitudes that followed toward the end of the Victorian era. As Seidman suggests, the period from 1880 to 1900 witnessed an increasing shift from the Victorian "spiritualization of love" to a new kind of "sexualization of love"; that is, there was a marked shift from the Victorian emphasis on the importance of love within marital bounds (and the suspicion of the dangers of sex) to a post-Victorian emphasis on sex as a vital component to any male-female relationship: "The language of love now intermingles with that of sex. Sexual attraction is taken as a sign of love; the giving and receiving of sexual pleasures are viewed as demonstrations of love. . . . The Victorian antithesis between love and sex . . . disappears."[66] With his central emphasis on the awesome power of intercourse as a source of both material happiness and divine knowledge, Randolph would seem to be an important figure in this shift from love to sex in the late nineteenth century.

THE SOCIAL MILLENNIUM IS AT HAND: FROM SEXUAL TO SOCIAL LIBERATION

> [I]t is in every man's power to make his wife love him, and in every wife's to make her husband worship God through her. On my soul, I truly believe, that if my rules were followed, the social millennium would be at hand.
>
> RANDOLPH, *Eulis!*

> It is doubtful if the Negro, since the world began, ever even approximated to such a high state of civilization as he has attained on North American soil; but that he will achieve great things in the future is . . . but a mere question of time.
>
> RANDOLPH, *Pre-Adamite Man*

Perhaps the most lasting contribution Randolph would make to the modern tradition of sexual magic was the link between sexual liberation and sociopolitical liberation. Like many nineteenth-century Spiritualists, Randolph had in his early years expressed the hope for a coming new age of peace and equality among all human beings. Speaking at the Harmonial Convention of 1854, Randolph "urged listeners to examine ten laws of Nature of man's own being and enjoined them to look forward to an age of gold in which peace on earth would prevail, and all men could meet . . . without distinction of color, sex or money."[67] Most importantly, Randolph saw in truly spiritual love, sex, and marriage the key to a kind of "social millennium," the transformation of the world of discord and strife into a harmonious and utopian community. "In the sexual love of man and woman he saw the greatest hope for the regeneration of the world, the key to personal fulfillment as well as social transformation and the basis of a nonrepressive civilization."[68]

Not only was Randolph an outspoken abolitionist, but he also had high hopes for a broader reform of society as a whole—a reform to be achieved above all through a reform of sexual relations. In Randolph's opinion, most of the ills rampant in the society of his day could be traced to the misuse of sexual love: "The great source of crime, illness, wretchedness and suffering has been traced to its one single source, and that is, the abuse, improper use and mismatching of people in their loves, conjugal relations and sexual incompatibilities."[69] For the whole balance of marriage rests on the mutual satisfaction of man and woman, and from this marital foundation proceeds the health and harmony of men and women in society as a whole. It is only when man and wife are denied natural satisfaction of their impulses and are led to unnatural means such as prostitution or masturbation that the social order falls apart:

> No strictly good human power can dwell in . . . any man who is sexually unsound, imbecile, puerile, weak or impotent; nor in any woman with fallen womb, leucorrhea, ulcerated vagina or passional frigidity. How, let me ask, in God's Holy Name, can you expect home, happiness or heaven in a family where the wife never . . . realizes the slightest *marriage joy*, or anything else than utter and profound disgust? How can a man be constant, faithful, good or great, who is . . . compelled to run after harlots because his wife is concentrated ice?[70]

As we have seen in Randolph's method of sexual magic, one of the most striking features of his work is his emphasis on the mutuality and equality of male and female in their loving union. Throughout his writings, he insists on the strength, power, and virtue of women, who are in many respects superior even to men: "[W]oman's love is the strongest force on earth; her cause is the purest, strongest and most just; and all the good powers of the universe are in sympathy therewith."[71] As such, women are not the mere property, slaves, or servants of men; on the contrary, "No rite of marriage gives ownership, but equality. Proprietorship means despair to her, dishonor to him."[72] This emphasis on the power and importance of women is even more clear in Randolph's fictionalized account of his "Free Love Trial," where he quotes one Marian Dennys, who describes her experience of reading Randolph's work on Love:

> Evil? I cannot yet tell whether the book's effect was that, or whether it was a grateful satisfaction that I had learned from a master the . . . secret of POWER. . . .
>
> Let women generally comprehend the author's principles and exert their force systematically, and from that moment woman becomes queen of the world, and sole arbitress of its destinies.[73]

Nonetheless, despite his insistence on the mutuality of male-female relations and the importance of sexual pleasure for both husband and wife in the conjugal union, Randolph is not exactly a feminist in the modern sense of the term. Indeed, he is quite "essentialist" in his views of male and female as both having specific essential, and quite different, qualities and natures. He makes it clear that this is not a matter of simple *equality* between the sexes, but rather a matter of *complementarity* between opposite aspects of human nature:

> Woman and man are not equals. They are diverse compatibles; each contrasts and opposites the other. . . . The two, together, constitute the being called man. . . . Neither owns the other, but are joint interestants in the social compact.[74]

Moreover, Randolph's views toward marriage, love, and domestic life are still quite conservative and traditional in many respects. Indeed, he sees sexual magic and the power of mutually fulfilling sexual pleasure as the key to domestic happiness and the welfare of society as a whole. According to R. Swinburne Clymer (1878–1966), one of Randolph's most enthusiastic students and Grandmaster of the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis, Randolph's Affectional Alchemy promises to hold the key to a healthier, happier, and more "normal" family of the future:

> [O]ur philosophies and physicians more and more lean toward Randolph's definition of Love . . . and *in the good time coming,* the *mysteries* may yet be *enacted in the family life. Then* will the human family be normal, healthy and happy![75]

Although Randolph could not be called a radical feminist or social reformer in every respect, he was in many ways at once a striking embodiment of some of the most important sexual debates of his era and also a bold visionary who foresaw many of the sexual changes of the next hundred years. Not only did he foresee the larger shift toward a "sexualization" of love that would emerge toward the end of the Victorian era, but more importantly, he also had a vision of a more harmonious, free, and equal society, based on a more harmonious, free, and equal expression of sexual love. In sum, Randolph's "science of sexual magic" was clearly a part of the larger search for a *scientia sexualis* in nineteenth-century Europe and America; yet unlike the *scientia sexualis* that Foucault examines, Randolph's sexual magic is not aimed at the larger program of social control, regulation of populations, and "bio-power"; on the contrary, it is part of a more radical vision of *liberation* on all levels—sexual, racial, social, and political alike.

CONCLUSION: THE MAGICAL DELUSION OF EULIS AND THE AMBIVALENT LEGACY OF P. B. RANDOLPH

> When taken literally . . . the teachings of Eulis are an awful and terrible delusion, and mean ruin to all who practice them as a means to obtaining power. . . . Such practices rear and nurse a swarm of vipers which will ultimately sap not only the vitals of the body but the soul and terminate the physical existence of their victims by suicide. . . . This is the magical delusion of Eulis.
>
> THOMAS H. BURGOYNE, "The Mysteries of Eros"

> The world generally may not be yet ready to accept and apply Randolph's instructions because, though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.
>
> R. SWINBURNE CLYMER, introductory to RANDOLPH, *The Immortality of Love* (1978)

With his remarkable system of sexual magic and his bold new vision of society, gender, and race, Randolph stands out as a striking reflection of mid-nineteenth-century America and its attitudes toward sex. In many respects he clearly embodies many basic themes in Victorian American culture: the emphasis on sex as the key to the innermost secrets of human life, the deeply ambivalent conception of sex as a power of awesome spiritual potential and terrible danger if abused, and the central importance of spiritual love within the guarded confines of marriage. In all these ways, he reflects what Seidman calls the "spiritualization" of love (and concomitant fears of the dangers of unbound sexuality) in mid-nineteenth-century America.

Yet at the same time, Randolph also took this idea of the awesome power and potential danger of sex to a whole new level, identifying sex as the most tremendous spiritual force, one that opened the soul up to both the supreme magical powers in the universe and to the darkest abyss of sin. Still more importantly, Randolph also tied his sexual magic to an ideal of liberation—liberation from sexual repression, gender inequality, and social oppression alike—that would in turn lead the way to a more harmonious social order.

Randolph's teachings soon gave birth to a whole new generation of occultism based on the principles of sexual magic. He can probably be credited as the forefather of almost all later sex magical traditions from the Ordo Templi Orientis down to our own popularized, mass-marketed, and digitalized version of sex magic in the West: "through Randolph's influence the genie had been released from the bottle; a notion that sex provided the lost key to scattered elements of mythology had taken on a practical side. A multitude of sexual mysticism flourished."[76] Ironically, despite his own relatively restrained and arguably quite conservative views of sex and marriage, Randolph would also be severely criticized by many esoteric groups largely because of his alleged abuse of sexual magic.

The first major group to adapt Randolph's teachings was the esoteric order known as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. Founded by a mysterious adept of Polish Jewish descent named Max Theon in the 1880s, the H.B. of L. was later organized under the leadership of Peter Davidson (1837–1915) and Thomas H. Burgoyne (1855?–1895?). Although little known today, the H.B. of L. has been tremendously influential on much of later Western esotericism, arguably as influential as its rival movement, the Theosophical Society. And much of its influence was the teaching of sexual magic, which was drawn primarily from Randolph. In the creation myth of the H.B. of L., the entire universe flows from the differentiation of the unmanifest Divinity into male and female aspects. Thus, "it is sex that propels evolution, and it is sex again, consciously employed by the potential adept, that leads to the reunion of the divine Ego." Each human being is in a sense a sundered bisexual monad, and by reuniting one's divided self through love, the adept can become "an immortal god or angel."[77] As Davidson summarized the mystery of sex,

> "To the pure all things are pure." . . . The sexual and love nature are the foundation of our existence, for it is so ordered that Man's greatest physical happiness, as well as his greatest woes, all spring from this source. . . . [O]f all acts, the sexual is the most potent, for herein Man approaches the very portals of Divine Creative Energy. . . . Far is it then from there being anything degrading in this, for God has made nothing of which man may be ashamed, for in this relation, soul meets soul in an ecstatic blending of Spirit.[78]

Yet while they were clearly influenced by Randolph, the members of the H.B. of L. were also quite critical of what they regarded as his sexual excesses and abuses of sexual magic. Indeed, they warned their initiates that Randolph had only been half-initiated and that he had fallen into black magic, which in turn led him to his own suicide. As Burgoyne wrote in his essay "The Mysteries of Eros,"

> The awful list of powers and forces set forth in the works of P. B. Randolph as attainable by the use of the sexual force, is a terrible snare. It was this fatal mistake that ruined the unfortunate misguided Randolph himself. . . . It is the way of Voudoosim and Black Magic.[79]

Against Randolph, Burgoyne warns that the power of sexual love must never be used for selfish material interests. Instead, it should only be used for two purposes, namely "the evolution of powers in the unborn child and the elaboration of social and domestic bliss in the married state." He insists that such magic should only be performed after observing at least twenty-one, and preferably forty-nine days of continence, and with the goal of procreation within a loving marriage:

> Both the male and female in the same prepared state, at the close of her lunar period, the solemn ceremony may be performed, each with the whole nature . . . given to the excitement of sexual love. . . . [T]hey, at the supreme moment of sexual excitement, when their souls expand and the seminal glands open to pour forth their contents of embryonic life, launch and project their whole souls into one effort of Will for the power desired upon the one object of the ceremony; but this object is not for power for any living being but for the embryo formed by their sexual union.
>
> Hence the whole mystery, in relation to love and sex, is the procreation of a human soul.[80]

Here we see that Randolph's method of sexual magic has been given an even more conservative interpretation than he himself had ever suggested. And it is an interpretation that is perfectly in keeping with larger Victorian attitudes toward sex and marriage. Ironically, the seemingly liberating power of sex has now been reinscribed into the same useful, productive, heterosexual model of love that dominated most of the sexual sciences in nineteenth-century England and America.

Nonetheless, despite these attempts to set limits around sexual magic, henceforth "the secret was out linking occultism with sex, it was impossible to ignore."[81] From the 1880s onward, a whole new wave of sexual magic would spread, most of it far less restrained and often far more radical and transgressive than either Randolph or the H.B. of L. could have imagined.

3 The Yoga of Sex

Tantra, Kama Sutra, and Other Exotic Imports from the Mysterious Orient

> In this time the East (which is now the mightiest representative of so-called Paganism) has conquered the West in bloody battle. After this Westerners can no longer sneer about "wild Pagans in faraway Asia," rather they should think about the future when . . . the peoples of India . . . will knock at the doors of Europe. Then we will see if the Christian religion has left the people of the West enough belief in God and enough resistance to successfully reject the inrushing masses of Asia, who serve the sex cult. To give our European Christian people such an inner resistance . . . a new kind of belief in God must be rooted in their hearts. If in the place of today's extreme unbelief a real living belief in a divinity could occur then it would not be bad if this was embodied in a phallus cult of some sort.
> THEODOR REUSS, *Lingam-Yoni*

> A man who desires sexual intercourse because of lust or for the sake of mere pleasure will surely go to the Raurava Hell, O Devi.
> KRISHNANANDA AGAMAVAGISHA, *Brihat Tantrasara*

If we browse the shelves of most popular bookstores or surf the various occultist Web sites now saturating cyberspace, we find that sexual magic is very commonly associated and often wholly identified with the body of Asian religious traditions known as Tantra. Indeed, one need only run a search on "sex magic" in any good search engine to come up with several hundred Web sites such as "SACRED SEX: Karezza, Tantra, and Sex Magic," "Tantra-Magic.com," and "Developmental Techniques for Tantra/Sex Magic," most of which are based on a fundamental equation of Western sexual magic with Asian Tantra. In fact, the more erotically challenged among us may now even consult the *Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex*, where we can find a fully illustrated step-by-step manual for Tantric sex magic and its manifold benefits:

> Sex magic is an advanced art of Tantric lovemaking. . . . [T]he phrase technically refers to creating what you want through Tantric union. . . .
>
> Create a vision of what you want to have in your life (more love/abundance/

> happiness). . . . Imagine sexual energy fueling your idea. Draw that energy up through your body. . . .
>
> "Feel" your goal silently or state it aloud to your self. . . . Have your partner repeat it to you to strengthen the energy of your desire. Think about that vision when you are in the highest states of pleasure, such as the moment of orgasm.
>
> Cry out "yes, yes" together to heighten permission for the dream to come true.[1]

An even more remarkable example of this melding of East and West is Nikolas and Zeena Schreck's *Demons of the Flesh.* Presented as a new form of the Tantric left-hand path adapted to the needs of the twenty-first-century West, *Demons of the Flesh* begins from the principle that "SEX IS POWER" and promises to unveil the secrets of "Sadomasochism, Orgies, Taboo-breaking, Fetishism, Orgasm prolongation, Sexual vampirism, Ritual intercourse with divine and demonic entities, Awakening the Feminine Daemonic," as well as "Erotic deprogramming and deconditioning."[2]

But what, if anything, do the Asian traditions of Tantra have to do with sexual magic as it is understood in the modern West? The answer, I think, is not much, really, but quite a lot, accidentally. By this I mean that the early forms of Tantra that emerged in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of India, China, Tibet, and Japan have little in common with the forms of sexual magic that emerged in Europe and America since the nineteenth century. And yet, since the late nineteenth century, the newly imported forms of Tantra would be progressively melded and often hopelessly confused with Western forms of sexual magic.

As most modern scholars agree, the term *Tantra,* or *Tantrism,* does not refer to a singular, monolithic, or neatly defined entity; instead, it is a rather messy and ambiguous term that is used to refer to a huge array of diverse texts, traditions, sects, and ritual practices that spread throughout the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain communities of South and East Asia from roughly the fourth or fifth century CE onward. As André Padoux and others have argued, the abstract category of Tantrism—as a singular, unified "ism"—is itself a relatively recent invention, and in large part the creation of Western Orientalist scholars writing in the nineteenth century.[3] And surely the identification of Tantrism with sex and sexual magic is a very recent idea. There is indeed a long tradition of sexual practice throughout the Indian Tantric schools since at least the fifth or sixth century, if not long before. And yet, as David Gordon White has recently demonstrated, these Indian sexual rites bear little if any resemblance to the various forms of "spiritual sex" and "sexual magic" now being marketed in New Age bookstores throughout America or on the seemingly infinite array of cybersexual Web sites now proliferating on the Internet.[4]

So how then did the complex body of Asian traditions known as Tantra come to be mingled, combined, and fused with Western sexual magic? And how did it come to be identified primarily with sensual gratification and sexual liberation? To answer this question, we need to look at some of the earliest Western scholarship on Tantra during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and then examine the complex process through which Tantra was transmitted to and appropriated by a Western audience at the turn of the twentieth century. Many men and women of the late Victorian period, it would seem, were working through their own deep ambivalence surrounding sexuality and religion, and they found in Tantra a wonderfully "other" form of spirituality—a kind of empty mirror onto which they could project their own most intense anxieties, fears, hopes, and forbidden desires. Thus, for many early Orientalist scholars and Christian missionaries, Tantra was reviled as the most perverse and depraved confusion of sexuality and religion, sensual indulgence, and spiritual ideals. Yet for many other authors of the late and post-Victorian era, Tantra seemed to represent an exhilarating freedom from the oppressive prudery of nineteenth-century Christian society.

In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of South Asian Tantric traditions, their use of sexual rituals, and their transmission to the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Interested readers might consult my previous book, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* for a more thorough discussion of the history of Tantra and its complex journey to the West. Here I will focus primarily on one of the most important later Tantric compilations, the *Brihat Tantrasara* (sixteenth century). I will then examine some of the early Western scholarship on Tantra during the British colonial era of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Finally, I will examine a few of the most important figures in the early transmission of Tantra to the West, such as Theodor Reuss and the highly esoteric group known as the Ordo Templi Orientis.

Traditional Indian Tantra and modern Westernized versions of Tantra, I will argue, share both striking similarities and profound differences.[5] Most importantly, both traditional Indian and modern Western forms of Tantra center around deliberate acts of transgression —that is, explicit violations of normal moral and sexual laws by engaging in activities that would normally be seen as impure or unclean by mainstream social standards (for example, drinking wine, eating beef, engaging in sexual intercourse in violation of class boundaries). Yet the key difference is the specific *end* to which this transgression is directed. Many Indian Tantric authors were generally quite conservative; writing as they did in Sanskrit, they tended to be male Brahmins and were typically invested in preserving rather than subverting the class system and Brahmin privilege. For Brahmin *Tantrikas* like Krishnananda, the transgressive rites of Tantric practice were in fact a *reinforcement* of his own status and privilege as a ritual expert and as one of the elite, initiated few with the knowledge and courage to overstep the moral boundaries that confine ordinary men and women in mainstream society. Conversely, for most modern Western disciples of Tantra, these transgressive rituals were a means to *subvert, undermine, and challenge* the dominant order of the nineteenth-century Christian world in which they were born by willfully violating its moral and sexual values. This urge toward social liberation through sexual subversion is one that would persist throughout later Western appropriations of Tantra down to our own generation.

SEXUAL UNION AND MAGIC IN HINDU SHAKTA TANTRA

> The one who is hesitant in drinking [wine] or is disgusted by semen and menstrual blood is mistaken about what is [in fact] pure and undefiled; thus he fears committing a sin in the act of sexual union. He should be dismissed—for how can he worship the Goddess, and how can he recite Chandi's mantra?
>
> KRISHNANANDA AGAMAVAGISHA, *Brihat Tantrasara*

> The Goddess is fond of the vulva and penis, fond of the nectar of vulva and penis. Therefore one should fully worship the Goddess with the drinking of the virile fluid and by taking pleasure in the wife of another man, as well as with the nectar of the vulva and penis—knows no sorrow and becomes possessed of perfect mantras.
>
> *Kaulavalinirnaya*

So just what is Tantra anyway? The word itself is most likely derived from the Sanskrit root *tan*, "to weave, stretch, or spread," and has been used throughout Indian history with a wide range of meanings. It appears from the earliest Sanskrit texts, the Vedas, to denote everything from a loom or weaving machine to a system of philosophy; to an army, row, or series; to a drug or remedy.[6] Most commonly *Tantra* is used to refer to a particular text—though one that may not necessarily contain the sorts of tantalizing and titillating things we normally associate with "Tantra" (nor are all "Tantric" texts called *Tantras*).

I first began puzzling over the nature of Tantra and its Western appropriations during a trip to Rishikesh, one of the most sacred sites in India, which attracts holy men, yogis, and pilgrims from all over India and has also become famous among Western audiences ever since the Beatles, Mia Farrow, and Donovan visited the ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh during the late 1960s. Today it is something of a mecca for both Indian seekers in search of spiritual retreat and Western hippies in search of enlightenment or cheap hashish; indeed, one of the most striking phenomena in spiritual centers like Rishikesh today is the birth of a new hybrid global lifestyle that I like to call the "white *sadhu*"—that is, European and American hippies who dress like Indian holy men, wear their hair in long dreadlocks, and wander around the subcontinent with their *Bhagavad Gita* in one hand and their *Lonely Planet* in the other. Not surprisingly, with its apparent fusion of spiritual transcendence and this-worldly pleasure (*yoga* and *bhoga,* or spiritual discipline and material enjoyment), Tantra has become one of the most popular brands of spirituality among the white *sadhu* crowd. As one flyer pasted around Rishikesh proudly advertised, "Tantra Yoga, the practice everyone's talking about!"

According to most popular literature on Tantra in the United States today, Tantra is defined primarily as spiritual sex or the use of sexual techniques to achieve higher consciousness and optimal orgasms ("nookie nirvana," as *Cosmopolitan* magazine recently defined it[7]). According to neo-Tantric guru Margo Anand, Tantra allows one to achieve "the feeling of lightness and joy that arises during ecstatic lovemaking, a sense of 'dancing in the sky,' that comes when we bring the quality of meditative awareness to our orgasmic power. . . . [O]rgasmic energy [can] be used as a magical, transforming force."[8] At the same time, Tantra in the West is also often identified not just with sex, but more specifically with *sexual liberation*—and above all, liberation from the sexual prudery and repression of Christian society. As the Schrecks put it, the Tantric adept is "the gleeful transgressor of all accepted boundaries," who overthrows the "distorted psychosexual conditions that the past centuries of Christian dominance have engendered."[9]

And yet, in most Asian traditions, Tantra is generally understood less in terms of "sex" than in terms of *power or energy.* It consists of a series of teachings and techniques aimed at awakening, harnessing, and utilizing the spiritual power believed to flow through the entire cosmos and the human body. As White defines it, Tantra is

> that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.[10]

In the Hindu Tantric traditions, this energy is typically identified as Shakti—the divine feminine power that creates, sustains, and destroys the entire universe. Above all, this power is embodied in the Goddess in her most awesome and terrible forms, such as Kali, the black mistress of time and death; Durga, the "formidable"; or Chamunda, who smiles ghoulishly as she sits on a corpse and drinks from a human skull. Tantric ritual seeks to harness and exploit this power, both as a means to spiritual liberation and as a means to this-worldly benefits, such as wealth, fame, and supernatural abilities. As Douglas Brooks summarizes, "The Tantrika conceives of the world as power. The world is nothing but power to be harnessed."[11]

Sexual union (*maithuna*) is indeed used in some traditions as one method to awaken and harness this power, but it is by no means the only, or even usually the most important, technique employed in Tantric ritual. And even when it is used, it is typically restricted to closely guarded esoteric rituals and surrounded by the most severe warnings about the dangers of its abuse. In the words of one of the most famous and influential medieval texts, the *Kularnava Tantra,*

> What I tell you must be kept with great secrecy. This must not be given to just anyone. It must only be given to a devoted disciple. It will be death to any others.
>
> If liberation could be attained simply by having intercourse with a [female partner], all living beings in the world would be liberated just by having intercourse with women.[12]

Many forms of Tantric practice do involve explicit forms of ritual transgression. The ritual consumption of meat and wine, and in some cases sexual intercourse in violation of class laws, can be employed as means of awakening and harnessing the awesome power, or Shakti, that flows through all things. Yet at the same time, Tantra is really by no means the subversive, antisocial force that many Western readers imagine it to be. On the contrary, it is in most cases a highly *conservative* tradition, which ultimately reasserts the ritual authority and social status of male Brahmins. Social and sexual taboos are typically violated only in highly controlled ritual contexts and are generally reasserted—indeed, *reinforced*—outside the boundaries of esoteric ritual: "Anti-caste statements should never be read outside their ritual context. Returned to ordinary life, no high caste Tantric would think of breaking social taboos. . . . The ritual egalitarianism of Tantrism in practice acted as a caste-confirming . . . force."[13]

Not only is there a vast diversity of different texts, sects, rituals, and traditions that fall under the general category of Tantra, but there is also a huge

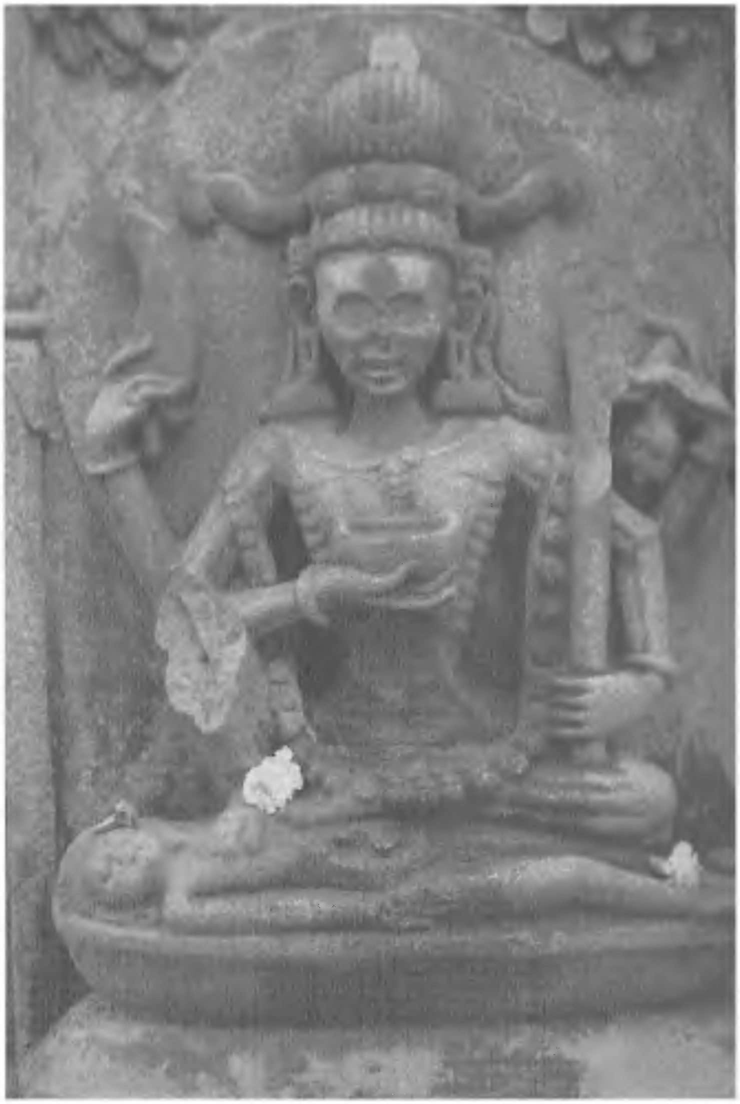


Figure 6. The Goddess Chamunda, Kamakhya, Assam, India.
Photo by the author.

diversity of opinion about the role of sexual union in Tantric practice. Various Tantric schools—and various modern scholars of Tantra—differ widely over the most basic questions: for example, is sexual union meant to be understood literally and performed physically, or is it to be understood symbolically and used merely as a symbol for the union of divine masculine and feminine energies? Should orgasm occur, or should orgasm be avoided? Should the semen be emitted during union, or should it be withheld and sublimated inwardly? Does the female partner have an active role in the union, or is she a mere tool or "flower" from which the "nectar" is collected and then cast aside? As David Gordon White has persuasively argued, one of the oldest Tantric schools, the Kaula (from *kula,* lineage or family), centered around the oral consumption of sexual fluids. By consuming the combined semen and menstrual fluids, the initiate was literally "incorporated" into the esoteric family and lineage, physically infused with its most powerful essence: "the Tantric Virile Hero generated and partook of his own and his consort's vital fluids in a 'eucharistic' ritual, whose ultimate consumer was the Goddess herself, who pleased, would afford the supernatural enjoyments and powers the practitioner sought."[14]

Later Tantric schools would assume a wide range of different opinions about sexual rites. Some would call for a difficult act of seminal retention and sublimation during the rite; others would use an even more complex procedure called the *vajroli mudra,* which involves not only seminal retention but actually the sucking or withdrawal of the female sexual fluids out of the woman's body into the male body (what some call the "fountain pen technique");[15] and others would reject the physical act of union altogether in favor of a purely symbolic understanding of divine union.[16]

For the sake of simplicity, however, I will examine just one example of sexual techniques outlined in one of the most important compendia of Tantric ritual, the *Brihat Tantrasara,* or "Great Essence of the Tantras." Composed in the last part of the sixteenth century in Bengal, the *Brihat Tantrasara* is to this day one of the most influential manuals of ritual and iconography in northeast India. Its author, Krishnananda Agamavagisha, lived and wrote in the city of Navadvipa, at that time the major intellectual center in Bengal.[17] Though a respected Brahmin, Krishnananda was also an important authority on the Tantras and compiled a vast digest of rituals, *mantras,* and *yantras* drawn from a wide array of texts. Like many other famous Tantric authors, such as Kashmiri theologian Abhinavagupta or the South Indian master Bhaskararaya, Krishnananda led a remarkable kind of "double life," appearing as a conservative Brahmin in the public sphere and practicing transgressive Tantric rites in the private space of ritual.[18]

Like most Hindu Tantric texts, the *Brihat Tantrasara* lists the ritual of sexual union as the fifth and last of the infamous "five Ms," or *panchamakara;* these are five powerful substances or acts that are normally forbidden in mainstream Hindu society, namely, meat (*mamsa*), wine (*madya*), fish (*matysa*), parched grain (*mudra*), and sexual union (*maithuna*). As Krishnananda observes, "the pleasure derived from sexual union is of the nature of Supreme Bliss."[19] The Tantric ritual of *maithuna,* or sexual union, however, is a kind of deliberately inverted sexual act, which involves intercourse, not only with high-class partners but even with untouchables, prostitutes, and various other mixed and low classes.[20] The female partner is here regarded not as a mere woman, but as the incarnate form of the eternal power and creative energy of the Absolute, which radiates the varied forms of the universe. Thus, she is consecrated by infusing all the deities into the various parts of her body—Vasanta and Madana in her breasts, Ganesha in her head, Durga on her forehead, Lakshmi in her brows, Sarasvati in her tongue, and so on—and honored with offerings of food, garments, and sweets, as if she were the Great Goddess herself: "One must consider the entire world to be born of woman. . . . When one greets a young girl, a woman intoxicated with youth, an old woman, a beautiful woman, an ugly or a deformed woman, he should contemplate her [as being in the form of the Goddess]."[21]

Having consecrated the partner in this way, the Tantrika then engages in a ritualized form of intercourse that is explicitly compared to a sacrificial ritual. Unlike many later forms of Tantric practice, which involve nonejaculation and retention of semen, Krishnananda's ritual reflects a different and probably older practice. Here the central act is the ejaculation of semen into the vagina, which is likened to ladling the oblation onto the sacrificial fire:

> As he releases his semen, he should say the great *mantra*, "Drunken, and clinging to the two hands of the Light and the Sky, *Shrucha!* I make the offering of *dharma* and *adharma* into the blazing fire of the Self, *svaham!*" . . . Sexual union is the libation; the sacred precept is the shedding of semen.[22]

The aim of the ritual, however, is not the conception of a child; rather, the goal is first to ejaculate into the vagina and then to carefully extract the combined semen and menstrual fluid, called the *kula dravya*, or lineage substance.

In India generally, bodily fluids, and above all sexual fluids, are considered dangerous and potentially polluting, as the ambivalent leftovers that overflow the boundaries of the physical body.[23] In the Tantric rite, however, the sexual fluids are the ultimate source of power. According to Krishnananda, this *kula dravya* is the most awesome and dangerous of substances, as the powerful "remnant" (*ucchishta*) of the sexual sacrifice:

> With the sacrificial elements, the semen, unbroken grains of rice, perfume, flowers, O Deveshi, he should worship the Goddess in the vagina. . . . With incense, lamps and various food offerings, the Kula adept should honor her in various ways, and then he should [consume] the remnants himself.[24]

This *kula dravya*, or "remnant," of the Tantric feast is surrounded with an aura of power and danger. If consumed outside the secret ritual, it will

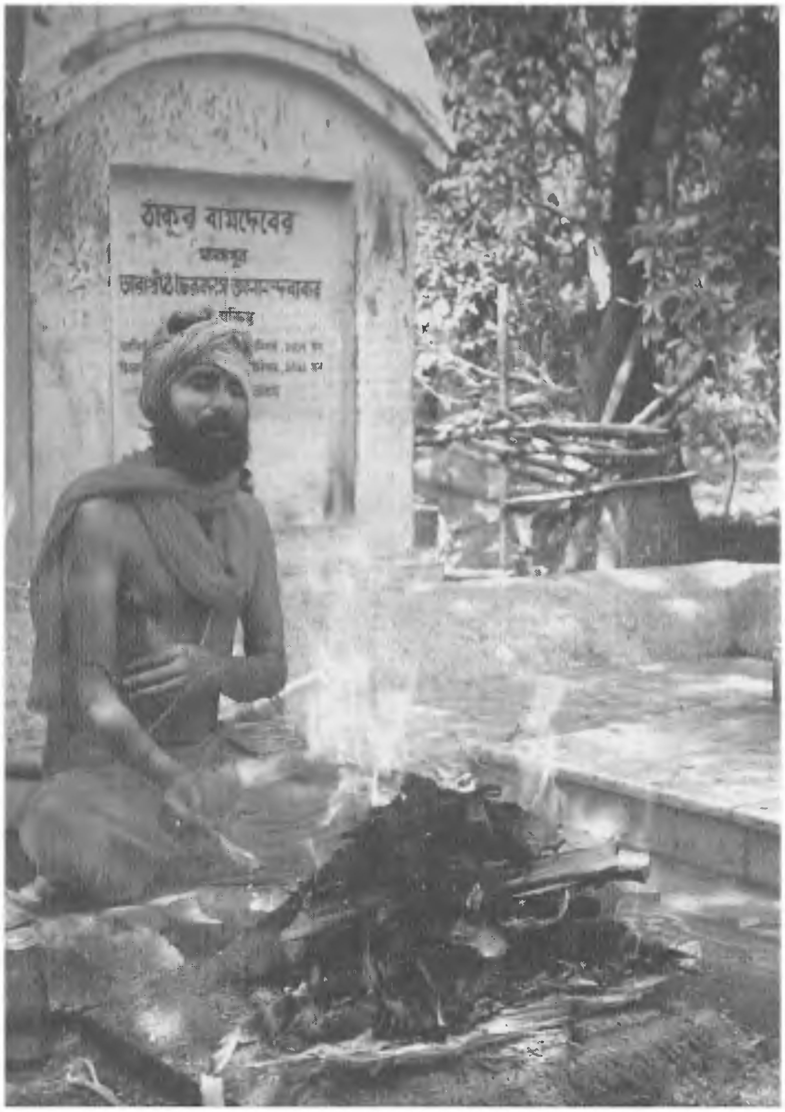


Figure 7. A Shakta Tantrika, Tarapith, Bangla, India. Photo by the author.

send one to the most terrible of hells: "apart from the time of worship, one must never touch a naked Shakti. And apart from the period of worship, the nectar must never be drunk by adepts. Touching it, their lives are lost, and drinking it, they would go to hell. Thus is the Kula worship."[25] But once placed in a sacrificial vessel and consecrated by the Goddess, the *kula dravya* is transformed into divine nectar, *amrita*. By consuming this nectar, Krishnananda writes, the Tantrika will enjoy supreme bliss and fulfillment of all worldly and otherworldly desires.

> Then with great effort, he must obtain the precious Kula nectar. For with that divine nectar, all [the gods] are pleased. Whatever the wise man desires, he will immediately attain. . . . Having purified the Kula substance, which has the nature of Shiva and Shakti, and having deposited this nectar of life, which is of the nature of the Supreme Brahman, in a sacrificial vessel, [he attains] the eternally blameless state free of all distinctions.[26]

It seems fairly clear that the kind of "sexual magic" described in Tantric texts like this one is quite fundamentally different from the sort of "nookie nirvana" described in most contemporary American popular literature. First, the goal in traditional Tantric practice is not simply optimal sexual pleasure or "orgasmic enlightenment," but rather the harnessing of the spiritual power contained in the sexual fluids themselves. This is a potentially dangerous power that can be awakened, not by surfing the Internet or purchasing *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex,* but only through complex and highly esoteric rituals.

Second and more important, most of the great Tantric authors like Krishnananda were by no means social dissidents in search of social revolution, but in fact highly respected male Brahmins deeply invested in the class system and their own status as ritual experts. While Krishnananda clearly advocates the use of alcohol and sexual intercourse, he also has strict rules about who can participate and which rites are prescribed for particular social classes. Indeed, there is a strong "double norm" at work in Krishnananda's attitude toward gender and caste. In the esoteric realm of Tantric ritual, ordinary laws of class and purity may be suspended or even eradicated altogether ("In the use of wine and sexual intercourse, one should make no distinction of caste"[27]) Yet, despite this seemingly egalitarian ideal, he also makes it clear that impure substances like wine and meat can be consumed only by non-twice-born castes; above all, a Brahmin must never compromise his purity by consuming meat or wine. "The offering of [wine] is only for *shudras*. . . . No brahmin, out of desire for Vamachara, should ever consume wine or meat."[28]

This double norm is even more striking in the case of sexual rituals and the role of women in Tantric practice. Although he recommends the *use* of women as *tools* in ritual practice, Krishnananda clearly upholds the traditional superiority of Brahmins, together with the subordination of women and non-twice-born castes. He states quite strongly that women and *shudras* have no right to any Vedic ceremonies or to the use of sacred mantras such as Om. He also makes it clear that, in the most powerful fifth M of *maithuna,* Brahmins must engage in intercourse only with Brahmin partners.[29] Moreover, although she is worshipped and adored in esoteric practice, the female partner seems to be used primarily as a means to an end—

namely, the experience of divine bliss, which is achieved within the body of the male practitioner. It is the male who realizes the supreme union of Shiva and Shakti within himself, and it is the male who consumes the coveted *kula* nectar—the sexual fluids extracted from the female body following intercourse. For the most part, "women . . . are made subordinate to males, and their ritual role is . . . limited to . . . being a partner for male adepts."[30] Hence, it seems more accurate to say that women in these rites are not so much "empowered" and "liberated" as they are used as tools for the optimization of the power of the male practitioner.

As Brooks has argued, the highly esoteric transgressions of Tantric ritual typically served not to undermine the class system or Brahmin authority, but on the contrary, to reassert them. That is to say, they reaffirmed the authority of male Brahmins as ritual experts who were skillful enough to handle the dangerous power unleashed by ritual impurity. "Tantrism . . . does not intend to be revolutionary in the sense of establishing a new structure of social egalitarianism. . . . It opens its doors only to a few who . . . seek to distinguish and empower themselves."[31] As we see in the case of Krishnananda, most Tantric authors insisted that such transgressions were to be carefully restricted to closed ritual contexts; outside of esoteric ritual, the class system and Brahmin authority were to be reaffirmed, perhaps more strongly than ever.

TANTRA IN THE ORIENTALIST IMAGINATION

> Shaktas usually meet in a forest glade where, by the light of a huge bonfire, they begin the ceremony by getting drunk and eating cow's flesh. On these nights everything is permissible; Untouchables jostle Kshatriyas, Brahmans dig knives into the remains of the cow, women come from the Zenana and discard their veils . . . Stretched on the grass with her sari thrown off lies a young girl . . . who must allow herself to be embraced by all the adepts in turn. . . . The culminating act of this abominable orgy is the slaughter of a young man or woman who, while still alive is torn to pieces by frenzied Shaktas. . . . [I]t is priests and Black Magicians who lead the way . . . who promise happiness to these poor deranged people who, groaning and screaming, wallow in the bloodstained mire.
>
> EDMOND DEMAITRE, *The Yogis of India*

> From the very cradle of civilization in the temples of Babylon, hidden beneath the seemingly sex-negative creed of Christianity, and in the Western magical revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the siren song of the left-hand path calls.
>
> NIKOLAS AND ZEENA SCHRECK, *Demons of the Flesh*

So if Tantra in its South Asian contexts was originally a highly esoteric tradition that had little to do with sensual abandon or sexual liberation, how then did Tantra come to be defined primarily as "spiritual sex" in the Western imagination? This shift begins, I think, during the early colonial era, with the first discussion of Indian religions by Christian missionaries and Orientalist scholars in the nineteenth century. The Orientalist interest in Tantra, I would argue, was a part of the broader concern with sexuality and its aberrations during the Victorian era. As we saw in the previous chapter, the nineteenth century was anything but a period of silence and suppression, but rather an era of unprecedented new discourse about sex, particularly in its socially deviant or perverse forms, which were now categorized in intricate detail.[32] As Richard von Krafft-Ebing suggested in his classic *Psychopathia Sexualis,* the sexual instinct is the most powerful, sublime, and potentially dangerous force in human nature, the origin of our religion and ethics as well as our most bizarre perversions:

> [S]exual feeling is the basis upon which social advancement is developed. If man were deprived of sexual distinction and the nobler enjoyments arising therefrom, all poetry and . . . moral tendency would be eliminated from his life. . . . Sexual feeling is the root of all ethics, and no doubt of aestheticism and religion. The sublimest virtues . . . spring from sexual life, which, however, on account of its sensual power, may easily degenerate into the lowest passion and basest vice. Love unbridled is a volcano that burns down and lays waste to all around it; it is an abyss that devours all—honor, substance and health.[33]

Thus Krafft-Ebing and other European sexual scientists compiled a vast catalog of sexual deviations and perversions, ranging from homosexuality and sadism to hypersexuality, necrophilia, polyspermia, nymphomania, and spermatorrhea. And among the most dangerous aberrations were those that mingled religion and sexuality: "The cause of religious insanity is often to be found in sexual aberration. In psychosis a motley mixture of religious and sexual delusions is observable. . . . The cruel, sensual acts of chastisement, violation, emasculation and even crucifixion, perpetrated by religious maniacs, bear our this assertion."[34] Thus it is not surprising that many European authors were particularly fascinated by the secret rites of the Tantrikas, with their remarkable fusion of spiritual power and sensual pleasure.

The first Orientalist authors, such as Sir William Jones and H. T. Colebrooke, actually had relatively little to say about Tantra. It was really not until the early nineteenth century, with the arrival of Christian missionaries like William Ward that Tantra became an object of intense interest and morbid fascination. Above all, the missionaries singled out the sexual element—

particularly transgressive sexuality—as the most horrific aspect of Tantra and the clearest evidence of its complete depravity. As Ward put it, the Tantras involve "a most shocking mode of worship" centered around the worship of a naked woman and rites "too abominable to enter the ears of man and impossible to be revealed to a Christian public."[35]

For later authors like H. H. Wilson and Sir Monier-Williams, Tantra was incorporated into the larger Orientalist narrative of Indo-European history and the decadence of modern India. According to most Orientalist accounts, the history of India was a steady decline from a golden age, comparable to ancient Greece and embodied in the texts of the Vedas, down to a modern era of licentious superstition, embodied in the perverse rites of the Tantras. Throughout nineteenth-century literature, we find Tantra described in the most vivid language as "lust mummery and black magic" (Brian Hodgson), "nonsensical extravagance and absurd gesticulation" (H. H. Wilson), and "black art of the crudest and filthiest kind" in which "a veritable devil's mass is purveyed in various forms" (D. L. Barnett).[36] By the early twentieth century, as we see in Edmond Demaitre's text cited in the epigraph above, Tantric ritual was believed to be a kind of grotesque fusion of Dionysian *sporagmos,* drunken orgy, and witches' sabbat.[37]

This identification of Tantra with sexual licentiousness was only further complicated in the late nineteenth century as Tantra became increasingly confused with various pornographic and sexological literature proliferating in Victorian England. One of the most widely read authors on Tantra (though also one of the least original) was Edward Sellon, who was best known as an author of cheap pornographic books such as *The New Epicurean; or, The Delights of Sex Facetiously and Philosophically Considered in Graphic Letters Addressed to Young Ladies of Quality.* Having served as an ensign in the Madras infantry as a young man, Sellon was particularly fascinated with the erotic mysteries of the Orient with all its dark-skinned "succulent houris." As he described his exploits among the enchanting women of India,

> I now commenced a regular course of fucking with native women. The usual charge for the general run of them is two rupees. For five, you may get the handsomest Mohammedan girls, and any of the high caste women who follow the trade of a courtesan. The "fivers" are a very different set of people from its frail sisterhood in European countries. . . . They understand in perfection all the arts of love, are capable of gratifying any tastes, and in face and figure they are unsurpassed by any women in the world. . . .
>
> I have had English, French, German and Polish women of all grades of society, but never, ever did they bear a comparison with those salacious, succulent houris of the far East.[38]

During his time in India, Sellon also learned something of Hindu belief and practice, which he published in his *Annotations on the Sacred Writings of the Hindüs*. Like his description of these dark-skinned, hypereroticized Indian women, his view of Hinduism continues and exaggerates many of the Orientalist stereotypes of the dark, mysterious, libidinous East. Above all, his vivid and titillating description of Tantric worship—in which "natural restraints are wholly disregarded" and which "terminates with orgies amongst the votaries of a very licentious description"—would become one of the most influential accounts in the late Victorian popular imagination.[39]

Finally, this equation of Tantra with its sexual aspects would be rendered hopelessly confused with the publication of various Sanskrit erotic texts by Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890).[40] Not only did Burton found a small secretive group called the Kama Shastra Society, but he also privately published the *Kama Sutra* (1883) and the *Ananga Ranga* (1885), the first Hindu treatises on love to be translated into English (texts which could not be officially translated until the mid-1960s). Although the *Kama Sutra* in fact had little if anything to do with Tantra, it would soon become largely confused and often completely identified with Tantra in the Western popular imagination. From Burton's time on, Tantra came to be increasingly associated and often hopelessly confused with the sexual positions of the *Kama Sutra*.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a few brave scholars made an effort to defend and revalorize Tantra, arguing that there is far more to this ancient tradition than mere illicit sexuality. The most important figure in this moralizing reform of Tantra was John Woodroffe (also known as Arthur Avalon), the enigmatic high court judge and secret Tantrika who made it his life's work to defend the Tantras against their many critics.[41] In Woodroffe's rather sanitized, rationalized account, Tantra is a noble philosophical tradition, basically in line with the Vedas and Vedanta and comparable in its symbolism to the liturgy of the Catholic Church.[42]

Despite Woodroffe's valiant attempt to present a sanitized and reformed version of Tantra, however, the equation of Tantra with sex would persist throughout the Western imagination, both popular and scholarly. By the mid-twentieth century, Tantra had become more or less equated with its sexual component, most commonly defined as "spiritual sex," and generally confused with other, more popular forms of Indian erotica like the *Kama Sutra*. For the most part, this is a misunderstanding and confusion that continues to this day.

NEO-GNOSTICS AND WESTERN TANTRIKAS: SEX MAGIC AND THE ORDO TEMPLI ORIENTIS

> "The Light of the East," despite all fog, has emerged victorious!
> *Oriflamme*

> A new civilization, a new system of morals will arise from the new Christianity of the gnostic Templar-Christians. . . . [T]he Church of the gnostic Neo-Christians seeks to found communities . . . of sinless, i.e. freed from the Nazarene-Christian idea of original sin, people.
> THEODOR REUSS, "The Gnostic Neo-Christians"

One of the most important groups in the transmission of Tantra to the West—and also in its radical transformation and perhaps de-formation—was the highly esoteric brotherhood called the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO). Although they are little known or studied in contemporary scholarship, the OTO was to play a critical role in the development of sexual magic and Tantra in the West over the last hundred years; for it is in the OTO that we find the first real attempt to unite the two currents of Western sexual magic, as passed on by P. B. Randolph and his followers, and the new, often garbled and misunderstood traditions of Tantra coming from India. The OTO, thus represents one of the first, even if rather misdirected and confused, attempts at cross-cultural synthesis between Eastern and Western esoteric traditions.

The original inspiration or spiritual father of the OTO is usually identified as Carl Kellner (1851–1905). Unfortunately, little is known about the actual details of Kellner's life, which have been obscured by the rather fanciful narratives later supplied by his disciples.[43] A wealthy Austrian paper chemist, Kellner had studied widely in various Western esoteric traditions such as Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism and is also said to have traveled to Asia to delve into the Eastern mysteries. In the course of his travels, Kellner is said to have studied with three Eastern masters whom he identified as a Sufi named Soliman ben Aifa and two Hindu Tantrikas named Bhima Sena Pratapa and Sri Mahatma Agamya Paramahamsa. Kellner is also said to have been in contact with an esoteric order known as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light. First appearing in Chicago in 1895 (though some date it earlier, to 1885), the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light appears to be either an offshoot or a rival branch of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, which, as we saw in chapter 2, had adapted many of Randolph's teachings on sexual magic.[44]

The primary architect of the OTO, however, was Kellner's associate, Theodor Reuss (1855–1923).[45] The son of a German father and an English mother, Reuss was a curious and controversial figure who was admired for his extensive knowledge of esoterica but was suspected by many of being a charlatan or a fraud. As his former friend August Weinholtz described him in 1907,

> This man's cleverness and extraordinary activities, his sophistries, his knowledge of languages, his ability to play no matter what role, make him a real international menace. In some respects he reminds one of Cagliostro, the most brilliant of all masonic charlatans, who successfully contrived to dupe his contemporaries.[46]

After enjoying some success as a music hall singer and newspaper correspondent, Reuss also appears to have been involved in some controversial political activities. In the 1880s, using false credentials, he joined the Socialist League, a Marxist group that attracted various dissident and dislocated communists and anarchists. Later, he would in fact be accused by many of operating as a spy under the direction of the Prussian secret police, who had allegedly sent him to England to monitor the activities of Marx's daughter Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Although the charges of espionage were never proved, they did add to Reuss's image as a mysterious and controversial figure who was variously regarded as either a genius or a charlatan.[47]

It is not entirely clear what connection there may have been between Reuss's political career and his occult activities; however, he would eventually claim to have an immense body of esoteric knowledge and training, identifying himself as a master in a wide range of occult traditions, particularly the "irregular" forms of Masonry such as the Ancient and Accepted and Primitive Rite of Memphis and Mizraim, and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. He would ornament himself with a variety of impressive titles, such as Illustrious Brother, Expert Master Mason, Secret Master, Perfect Master, Grand Elect Knight Kadosh, 30°, Grand Inquisitor Commander, 31°, Prince of the Royal Secret, the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis, and various other increasingly elaborate ranks and degrees.[48]

During the 1890s, Reuss claims to have collaborated with Kellner in order to form a new esoteric order dedicated to the inner secrets of magical practice. Initially, the goal was to found a new *Academia Masonica* that would enable all Freemasons to become familiar with all existing degrees and systems of Masonry. This appears to have been the original inspiration for the OTO, as a complex fusion of Craft Masonry, Rosicrucianism, and various Eastern imports, above all the techniques of Hindu Tantra. However, as Reuss defined it, the "Ancient Order of Oriental Templars" is nothing less than a secret, powerful brotherhood that has been operating covertly throughout all of history, guiding the forces of culture, politics, and even revolutions:

> Let it be known that there exists, unknown to the great crowd, a very ancient order of sages, whose object is the amelioration and spiritual elevation of mankind. . . . This Order has existed already in the most remote, prehistoric times, and it has manifested its activity secretly and openly in the world . . . it has caused social and political revolutions and proved to be the rock of salvation in times of danger and misfortune.[49]

The time had now come for this secret order of sages to reveal itself openly to the world.

The Secret of Sexual Magic: Tantra and Sex Magic in the OTO

> [T]he sexual-religion of the future . . . is based on the necessary ritual completion of the sex-act. The New Gospel of Salvation of Sexual Religion!
>
> THEODOR REUSS, "Parsifal and the Secret of the Graal Unveiled"

From its origins, Reuss's order claimed to be in possession of the innermost secret of all esoteric systems, the most profound mystery that lies at the foundation of all occult, mystical, and spiritual traditions, even the secret of the Eastern Sages, and the means to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. According to a 1904 edition of *Oriflamme:*

> One of the secrets which our Order possesses to its highest degree consists in the fact that it supplies the properly prepared brother with the PRACTICAL means to erect the true Temple of Solomon in Man and to find again the "lost Word": namely, that our Order supplies to the initiated and chosen brother the practical means to obtain proof of his immortality even during his earthly existence. . . .
>
> This secret is one of the true secrets of Masonry and exclusively the secret of the Occult High Degree of Our Order. It has come down to our Order by word of mouth from the fathers of all true Freemasonry, the "Wise Men of the East."[50]

But what is this tremendous secret of the East, which opens up the treasures of all occult systems of knowledge? The answer is given eight years later in the 1912 anniversary issue of the *Oriflamme,* this deepest mystery is nothing less that the secret of sexual magic, which, though extremely rare and precious, can be revealed to the most qualified seekers:

> Our Order possesses the KEY which opens up all Masonic and Hermetic secrets, namely, the teaching of *sexual magic,* and this teaching explains, without exception, all the secrets of Nature, all the symbolism of FREEMASONRY and all systems of religion.[51]
>
> Now, although this teaching of sexual magic is the secret of the OTO and is not suitable for publication in a pamphlet which reaches wide circles, nev-

> ertheless, the management of the Order has decided to lift a very small tip of the veil which conceals our secret . . . to enlighten earnest seekers."[52]

Sexual magic was already an important part of Carl Kellner's esoteric practice, which he claimed to have learned from the Tantric masters of the Orient. Kellner was in fact one of the few Western authors at the time who had a fairly detailed knowledge of Yoga, and certainly one of the few who had anything more than utter disdain for the esoteric practices of Hindu Tantra. Thus he adapted the yogic idea of the *vayus,* or vital energies believed to exist in specific parts of the physical body, such as the heart, anus, navel, larynx, and eyes. He was particularly interested in the *vayus* associated with the reproductive organ (the *napa*), which could be sublimated, redirected, and transformed into intense spiritual energy through yogic practice. This, according to Kellner, is true "sexual magic" and the source of godlike power:

> [S]exual magic is concerned with the Vayus Napa (in the reproductive organ). . . . This exercise is called "Transmutation of the Reproductive Energy." This exercise of the transmutation of the Reproductive energy is not done for the purpose of sexual excess, but in order to strengthen the eternal God Power on the earthly plane requiring sexually strong, perfect persons. . . . The reproductive energy is a process of creation. It is a Godly act! In the reproductive organ (male and female) there is concentrated in the smallest space the greatest vital force. . . . [T]he performer of the exercise must concentrate all his thoughts on withdrawing and lifting the reproductive energy from the organ into the solar plexus, where he "wills" that it be stored for transmutation purposes. . . . [F]inally the great "merging" or reunion occurs and the performer becomes the seer while remaining fully conscious and experiences what he sees. This is white sexual magic![53]

Many believe that Kellner also engaged in more esoteric forms of magic together with a small circle of disciples called the "Inner Triangle"; these involved various forms of Yoga, meditation, and sexual rites aimed at generating the divine "Elixir": "His wife was the Great Goddess. Kellner himself acted as Babylonian Priest. In his house was a room without windows where the tantric rites took place to prepare the Elixir, that is: male and female sexual fluids."[54]

It was really Theodor Reuss, however, who made sexual magic a central part of OTO practice. Indeed, Reuss regarded sexual rituals and the cult of the Lingam (the Sanskrit word for the phallus or male sexual organ) as the root of all religion, "the most ancient cult on earth," and the core of every spiritual tradition from prehistoric times down to the Christian church itself. And the quintessential form of phallic worship is Tantra. As Helmut

Möller and Ellic Howe observe, Reuss's knowledge of Tantra seems to have been drawn primarily from secondary European sources and was apparently "nebulous" at best.[55] Thus, following most European Orientalists of the day, he defines Tantra as basically "sexual religion." In his words, "Tantra (Sexual-religion) is built on the active principle of generation, as it manifests in the female energy (Shakti) and the manly energy (Shiva). The Linga (Phallus) is the holiest form in which and through which the great lord-God (Maha-Deva) must be worshipped."[56] This Tantric sexual religion is for Reuss essentially the same as that of the Eleusinian mysteries and early Christian Gnosticism, both of which he sees as cults of fertility and sensual ecstasy:

> The Eleusinian mysteries were pure Phallus cult. The ceremonies were those of the Tantrics. The members of these mysteries partook of such ecstasy that the freedom of the senses came to them as a totally natural by-product. . . .
>
> The secret teachings of the Gnostics (Primitive Christians) are identical with the Vamachari rites of the Tantrics . . . Phallicism is the basis of all theology and underlies the mythology of all peoples. . . . The Phallus as a divine symbol received divine veneration for thousands of years in India.[57]

Indeed, Reuss believes that the ancient cult of the Phallus has survived in a masked form throughout the centuries of Christian rule, persisting throughout popular worship and even in a disguised form in the symbolism of the mainstream Church itself. As he argues in the introduction to his treatise on sexual worship, *Lingam-Yoni,*

> In spite of the efforts of the Christian churches, over 120 million people . . . are still practitioners of the sex cult (Lingam-yoni), which surely shows the need to spread widely authentic material about phallism. With that a truer and fairer guideline for the modern sex cult movement (which should be condemned for its excrescences, but which reactivates the ancient divine worship in its inner core) can be found. . . . [T]he Catholic Church uses, in a hidden form, the phallus worship, Lingam-Yoni cult . . . taken from so-called Pagan rituals. . . . It was the leading religious cult during the fullest flowering of the cultures of classical antiquity, and is still a living factor in our time.[58]

The modern world, Reuss believed, was entering a new era in which the repressive attitudes of Christian Europe were being replaced by a liberated view of sexuality. Even the proliferation of pornography was a natural by-product of this new acceptance of sexuality and the body:

> [O]ur time is a time of transition. Old ideas, old habits, old opinions and principles of living vanish bit by bit, and new ideas, new habits . . . even new religion, seem to grow out of our modern Western cultural ferment. It is only natural that this fermentation makes for peculiar bubbles, and occasionally a

> lot of foul smelling gas. I need only point out the frightening growth of pornographic literature. . . . But actually these are only the side-effects of a growth period of a new Weltanschauung, maybe even an entirely new world."[59]

Under Reuss, sexual magic would become a central part of the upper grades of the OTO. Reuss's order was organized in ten major degrees, the lower degrees consisting of more traditional Masonic initiations and the tenth, Supreme Rex, existing largely as an administrative degree. It is in the ninth degree that the most profound mystery of mysteries was to be revealed, namely, "the highest, most glorious, holiest, Symbol of sexual magic! Here begins a secret teaching which is exclusively for initiates." And this secret of sexual magic is in turn identified with the pre-Christian "pagan" traditions, of which Indian Tantra and the union of *lingam* and *yoni* is the clearest example.[60] Much of the OTO literature employs complicated symbolism drawn from alchemy and Hermeticism to describe esoteric sexual practices. As Francis King explains, "the code phrase for the penis is the athanor, that for semen is the blood of the red lion, or the Serpent, while the vagina is referred to as the retort. . . . [T]he fluids which lubricate the female organ are the menstruum of the gluten and the mixture of these with the male discharge is the first matter or, when it has been impregnated with the magic power, the Elixir."[61] Heterosexual rites could be used for a wide variety of magical purposes, ranging from the invocation of a god to the finding of hidden treasure. For example, one might use sexual magic to magically empower a talisman; by concentrating on one's intended goal at the moment of orgasm and then anointing the talisman with the semen, one infuses it with magical power which can then be employed for a wide range of this-worldly and otherworldly ends. Similarly, the power of controlled imagination and sexuality can be used to incarnate a god within one's consciousness, by concentrating all one's will on the deity at the moment of orgasm and so "blending their personalities into one."[62]

In addition to heterosexual magic, homoerotic rites also may have been a part of OTO practice from an early date. The Lingam is, for Reuss, the most sacred symbol of creation, divine power, and the Logos; as Peter Koenig observes, Reuss regarded the semen as the key to magical power and viewed women as ultimately nonessential to magical practice. Indeed, Reuss would later claim that the "central secret of the OTO" was in fact a sexual interpretation of the Holy Mass, which involved "the union of man with God through consumption of semen—as allegedly taught by Jesus Christ."[63]

Not surprisingly, Reuss and his disciples generated a certain amount of scandal and were accused of all manner of perversion. Chief among the accusations was homosexuality. Thus, the *Masonic Journal of Vienna* published an article claiming that Reuss had engaged in a shocking "homosexual assault" that involved the "mutual touching of the phalli" during esoteric rituals.[64] Another journal, *Der Judenkenner,* alleged that several novices were so horrified by these rites that they reported Reuss to the police: "These 'Novizen' were so disgusted by these 'revelations' that they alerted the police to arrest the libertine Reuss, who . . . fled to his crony John Yarker in England."[65]

Freedom from Original Sin: The Utopian Social Vision of the OTO

> Freedom in & before God, that is the liberation from original sin, through which the reigning christian-nazarene Church has enslaved to their priests humanity from birth. . . . Love is the crowning of the world. Love is the highest law. Love is God.
> THEODOR REUSS, "The Gnostic Neo-Christians"

Like Randolph, Reuss clearly linked his sexual magical practices to a much larger vision of social transformation. Yet he would also go a great deal further than Randolph had ever imagined, by calling for the creation of an entire new morality and a new civilization based on freedom from original sin and sexual guilt. The power of sexual magic was not to be a matter of secret practice among the initiated few, but would eventually spread outward and lead to the radical reform of society at large: "the sexual re-education of the masses would be the responsibility of 'priest-doctors.' . . . [P]rivate property would be eliminated, forced labour and eugenics were to be introduced, while only physically perfect parents would be permitted to have children. The religion of the OTO would become that of the State."[66]

The new civilization that Reuss imagined was to be based on the worldview of the early Christian Gnostics—or at least what Reuss imagined the Gnostic worldview to be, given the fairly skewed knowledge of Gnosticism in early-twentieth-century Europe. This new society would be a "Neo-Gnostic" society of "Templar-Christians" who had rejected the false idea of original sin and realized the inherent divinity of the sexual act. For the sexual act is the power to create life, and it is this power that makes us godlike, capable of creating life like God himself. Sexual union is thus a sacrament and a "communion," no less than the sacrament of the Eucharist:

> A new civilization, a new system of morals will arise from the new Christianity of the gnostic Templar-Christians. . . . [T]he Church of the gnostic

> Neo-Christians seeks to found communities, existing on a co-operative basis, of sinless, i.e. freed from the Nazarene-Christian idea of original sin, people. For the formation of such gnostic "Christos" communities only those are suitable who are . . . convinced of the truth of Manu's saying: "Only he who has understood the holy doctrine of sanctity of the God-Organs is truly liberated and free from all sins." . . . The gnostics recognize that humanity's "resemblance to God" consists in the fact that they are able to grasp and understand the divinity of the earthly act of procreation as a parallel of the divine act of original creation. . . . [T]he act of love consummated under the control of the will in God is a sacramental act, a "Mystic Marriage with God," a communion, a union of self with God.[67]

A key part of Reuss's vision of a new civilization free of original sin was a new respect for women. Because women can bear children, they are the ultimate embodiment of sexuality and should be revered as the highest symbol of this divine power of creation. This reverence for woman as Mother would in turn form the foundation for a new kind of nation for the future:

> The first aim of our Order in the esoteric-practical realization of our teachings is that in the future the "Mother" is to be honored as "High priestess" in her family.
>
> Every pregnant woman is a "Saint" in our eyes. . . . She is the symbol of human procreation from the Godly power of creation. . . .
>
> Our Order proves that it does not merely follow abstract goals, but that it is capable of intervening energetically in the everyday life of our common people whenever it is urgently necessary that they be educated to a correct understanding . . . of the duties of a nation with regard to its own future, particularly during the present era.[68]

It would, however, be a mistake to regard Reuss as a feminist. His ideal of the true woman was largely in keeping with mainstream nineteenth-century values: woman is to be exalted as a mother and revered for her central role in the domestic sphere. In fact, Reuss was quite critical of the early form of feminism emerging in England, "with its extreme Motherhood-denying 'woman's movement' (Suffragettes),"and he hoped that the OTO could help restore the true cult of Motherhood there.[69]

One of the more intriguing episodes in Reuss's life and utopian aspirations occurred during the last decade of his life in Switzerland. In August 1917, Reuss organized an international "Anti-National Congress" under OTO auspices at Monte Verita, a liberal commune near Ascona on Lake Maggiore. Interestingly enough, this event is mentioned in the notorious work *Die Geheimnisse der Weisen von Zion* (translated into English as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an immediate best seller when published in

Germany in 1919). The author, whose actual name was Muller von Hausen, quotes from a letter that Reuss was alleged to have written:

> My secret aim for this congress is to bring together land reformers, vegetarians, Theosophists, pacifists . . . from Spain, Italy, Holland, Russia, France, etc. and convert their hitherto poisonous anti-German sentiments into something more fair to Germany. . . . The 'Anti-Nationalist Cooperative Congress' flag and the draft programme are naturally merely a camouflage. . . . Germany should send two masonic representatives who are men of the world and know the true . . . history of Freemasonry and its secret political history.[70]

Ever a subject of controversy and scandal, Reuss has been accused of both sociopolitical subversion and simple greed-driven chicanery. According to one account of the events at Monte Verita, Reuss's congress assumed "almost orgiastic qualities. An O.T.O. lodge was founded, there were 'initiations,' and Reuss pocketed the money received from successively higher degrees."[71] Indeed, more than one critic has accused Reuss of simply peddling secret degrees filled with tantalizing esoterica to various European bourgeoisie who liked the idea of becoming "knights" and "masters" in these arcane—and deliciously transgressive—occult orders.[72]

Sex, Transgression, and Liberation, East and West: A Brief Comparison

> Even the perversions in the excrescences of most modern fermentation
> are at their bases of divine origin.
> THEODOR REUSS, *Lingam-Yoni*

If we compare the various forms of esoteric practice found in Hindu traditions like the *Brihat Tantrasara* and those in modern Western movements like Reuss's OTO, I think, we find both remarkable similarities and profound differences.[73] I will save a more detailed discussion of the role of "transgression" in sexual magic for the following chapter, on Aleister Crowley. Here I will simply observe that both the Hindu Shakta Tantrikas and Reuss do indeed engage in deliberately transgressive ritual acts that systematically violate conventional social codes and moral laws; in both cases, these transgressions do center at least in part around ritualized sexual intercourse and the consumption of sexual fluids as a source of superhuman magical power. Both, moreover, are generally quite male-oriented and arguably even misogynistic in certain respects, making the male practitioner the primary beneficiary of the rites and treating women largely as tools (perhaps dispensable ones, at that) in secret ritual.

Apart from these interesting similarities, however, there are also fairly obvious and important differences between the Tantric and OTO rites. First and foremost, Reuss begins from the fundamental (mis)identification of Tantra with sex. Following the nineteenth-century Christian missionaries and European Orientalist scholars, Reuss defines Tantra essentially as "sexual worship"—the only difference being that he turns the Orientalist narrative completely on its head, by regarding this Tantric sexual worship not as a depraved confusion of religion and sensuality but as the most-needed spiritual remedy for a prudish, hypocritical Christian society. From Reuss's time onward, this basic (mis)equation of Tantra with sex has been a consistent theme in virtually every popular Western text on Tantra, from Omar Garrison's *The Yoga of Sex* to Judy Kuriansky's *Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex*.

Second and more important, most traditional forms of Hindu Tantra are by no means the subversive, antisocial, or revolutionary force that they are commonly imagined to be by Western onlookers. As we have seen in the case of Krishnananda, most Tantric authors were quite conservative and limited their transgressive actions to the confines of highly controlled secret ritual. Outside of the ritual circle, social boundaries and gender relations were reasserted, indeed, arguably even reinforced. Conversely, Reuss and virtually all later "Western Tantrikas" have embraced Tantra as a radical force of resistance and challenge to the existing social order and political establishment. Since Reuss's time down through the sexual revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, and continuing to this day, Tantra has been transformed from an essentially conservative and highly esoteric tradition into what neo-Tantric guru Nik Douglas calls an "engine of political change."[74] As Nikolas and Zeena Schreck put it in their manual of twenty-first-century sex magic, Tantra is the path of "social defiance," based on the "refusal to follow . . . society's religious restrictions"; it is, as such, inherently opposed to any form of totalitarianism:

> If the left-hand path is dangerous . . . one of its primary hazards is the peril of freedom in a world almost instinctively committed to crushing liberty in whatever form it might appear. All autocracies have held sway by severely curbing the full development of sexual power in their subjects. The left-hand path . . . must be viewed as a threat to *any* hierarchy that seeks to bridle the development of man into god.[75]

In sum, in the course of its remarkable journey to the West, Tantra has been transformed from a highly esoteric and generally conservative tradition into one of the most powerful symbols of sexual pleasure, sexual liberation, and political freedom.

CONCLUSION: TANTRA, SEX MAGIC, AND LIBERATION IN WESTERN POPULAR CULTURE

> Kulacara must be kept completely secret. In the Nilatantra it is said, the Kula rituals must be performed in an isolated place, and there must be no opportunity for common people to see.
> KRISHNANANDA AGAMAVAGISHA, *Brihat Tantrasara*

> Tantra traditions come from ancient practices in India, Nepal and China. Whereas once they were reserved for royalty, now they are for all of us. The practices also help heal past hurts, often stored in sexual centers of the body, so that you can be more . . . open to love.
> JUDY KURIANSKY, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex*

Once Reuss and the OTO had let the "secrets" of sex magic and Tantra out of the bag, a wide array of erotic-magical traditions would begin to flourish through Europe and the United States. And in the process, the techniques of sexual magic derived from Randolph and the OTO would be increasingly mingled and (con)fused with a somewhat garbled version of Indian Tantra.

Theodor Reuss himself seems to have been aware of the dangers and consequences of revealing these sexual secrets; already in 1906, in his *Lingam-Yoni* he predicted that these Eastern teachings on sexual magic would very likely be misunderstood and abused by many:

> Some Tartuffe may say that we are "immoral," "corrupting," etc., but we are prepared for that. . . . While treating of this subject as we do in this work we will touch upon and describe many things which might inspire libertines of both sexes to perverted thoughts, which is only natural, but not our fault. To the pure, as we know, everything is pure.[76]

The OTO itself gave birth to a number of offshoots and rival movements, such as the Fraternitas Saturni, the Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua, the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, the Typhonian Current, and the Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua, a breakaway branch formed in 1921 which focused particularly on sex magic and Vodoo. Today, as critics like Peter Koenig observe, the once highly esoteric OTO has become quite popularized and commercialized, as we can now discover all the secrets of Tantric sex magic, so long as we are prepared to pay for the costly series of initiations required to advance in its esoteric hierarchy.[77]

Not only did Tantra and sex magic begin to proliferate throughout these esoteric traditions, but they also began to spread throughout Western popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Already in 1906, the first Tantrik order in America was founded by the infamous Dr. Pierre Arnold Bernard, better known in the popular press as the "Omnipotent Oom" and the "Loving Guru." Indeed, Bernard became quite notorious in the popular press for his secret sexual rituals, which involved "wild Oriental music and women's cries, but not those of distress."[78] His Tantrik order also attracted some of the wealthiest, most affluent clientele of the day, including members of the Vanderbilt family and composer Leopold Stokowski, among many others.

By the 1960s and 1970s, Tantra and sexual magic would become key parts of the countercultural and sexual revolutions, closely identified with the larger goals of liberation from all forms of inhibition, whether social, political, moral, or sexual. Thus, in 1964 Omar Garrison published his *Yoga of Sex,* which promised that "Through . . . the principles of Tantra Yoga, man can achieve the sexual potency which enables him to extend the ecstasy crowning sexual union for an hour or more, rather than the brief seconds he now knows."[79] By the late 1960s Tantra had entered Western pop culture in full force, as a flood of titles like *Tantra: The Indian Cult of Ecstasy* began to appear, and Mick Jagger even coproduced a film on the Five M's entitled *Tantra: Indian Rites of Ecstasy.*[80] Finally, in the 1970s and 1980s, a wave of neo-Tantric gurus like the infamous "guru of the rich," Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, began to attract massive followings in the United States, offering both sensual ecstasy and spiritual transcendence. In Rajneesh's words, "Tantra says everything has to be absorbed, *everything!* . . . Sex has to be absorbed, then it becomes a tremendous force in you. A Buddha . . . a Jesus, they have such a magnetic force around—what is that? Sex absorbed."[81]

Today, as we surf the "Tantra.com" Web site or browse our *Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex,* it would seem that Tantra has been thoroughly commodified and mass-marketed as the most exotic, erotic form of the exotic Orient itself. According to Kuriansky's "idiot" version of Tantra/Sex Magic, this is a simple, direct method to achieve both sexual and spiritual ecstasy; as such, it is naturally "consistent with Western obsessions with worldly pleasures," with Western "individualism," and with our quick-fix mentality:

> Although tantric practices were developed in the Eastern part of the world, they are particularly . . . appealing to the Western world today. . . . Tantric sex promises simple steps and instant results, which are appealing to Westerners who are conditioned to "instant" lifestyles (instant coffee, fast food, instant gratification) and quick fixes.[82]

Indeed, Kuriansky even goes so far as to say that the West has saved and "revived" Eastern Tantric practices, which had been lost, forgotten, or suppressed in modern times: "[T]hese practices are being revived now in America and being returned to their origins. . . . I call this the 'Enlightenment Road' for new thinkers, bringing precious new ways of life from one country to another, much like traders brought their wares along the famous 'Silk road' . . . centuries ago."[83]

In short, it would seem that Tantra in its Western forms has been remarkably transformed into a life-affirming, sexually liberating method of self-improvement that fits in nicely with American consumer culture. One is thus tempted to agree with Koenig that what we are witnessing is a kind of "McDonaldisation of occultism," transmitting a form of "McGnosis" based on OTO sex magic: "It is only a matter of time before we see the 'Caliphate' not only selling T-shirts with the O.T.O.-lamen and . . . pornography but also frozen 'Amrita' (the sexual-secretion cocktail) over the Internet."[84]

Virtually all of this Western literature on Tantra, however, has perpetuated the same basic misperceptions that colored Reuss's view of Eastern religions—namely, the equation of Tantra with sex, the identification of Tantric ritual with Western sex magic, and the association of Tantra with sexual liberation and sociopolitical subversion. Thus we now find a wide array of literature such as *Secrets of Western Tantra, Tantra without Tears, and Sex Magic, Tantra, and Tarot,* most of which are based on this fundamental (con)fusion of OTO-style sex magic and Hindu Tantra. As we will see in the following chapter, perhaps no figure would take this goal of radical liberation through sex magic and Tantra further than the OTO's most infamous member, Aleister Crowley.

4 The Beast with Two Backs

Aleister Crowley and Sex Magick in Late Victorian England

> The whole trouble comes from humanity's horror of Love. For the last hundred years, every first-rate writer on morals has sent forth his lightnings and thunders, hailstones and coals of fire, to burn up Gomorrah and Sodom where Love is either shameful and secret or daubed with dug and sentiment.
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *The Law Is for All*

> The point about Crowley is that he seems to contain all these sorts of ideas and identities—indeed, most of the vices of the twentieth century—and he was dead at the end of 1947.
> SNOO WILSON, author of the play "The Beast" (in Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*)

If there is one figure with whom the practice of sex magic is generally associated in the modern imagination, it is surely Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). Known in the popular press as "the wickedest man in the world," and proclaiming himself the "Great Beast 666," Crowley was the object of media scandal, moral outrage, and titillating allure throughout his life. In the years since his death, he has become better known as one of the most important influences on the modern revival of magic and witchcraft. Yet, despite his importance, Crowley has been largely ignored by scholars of religion. In most cases he has been dismissed as, at best, a pathetic charlatan and, at worst, a sadistic pervert and a ridiculous crank. Most scholars of Western esotericism, such as Antoine Faivre, make only passing reference to Crowley, while leading scholars of New Age religions such as Wouter Hanegraaff give him only the briefest mention.[1]

Perhaps the primary reason for this neglect of Crowley—and also for the scandal and titillation that surrounded him—was his practice of sexual magic (or magick, to use Crowley's spelling).[2] Rejecting the prudish hypocrisy of the Victorian world in which he was raised, Crowley identified sex as the most powerful force in life and the supreme source of magical power. Taking an apparent delight in outraging the British society of his time, Crowley made explicit use of the most "deviant" sexual acts, such as masturbation

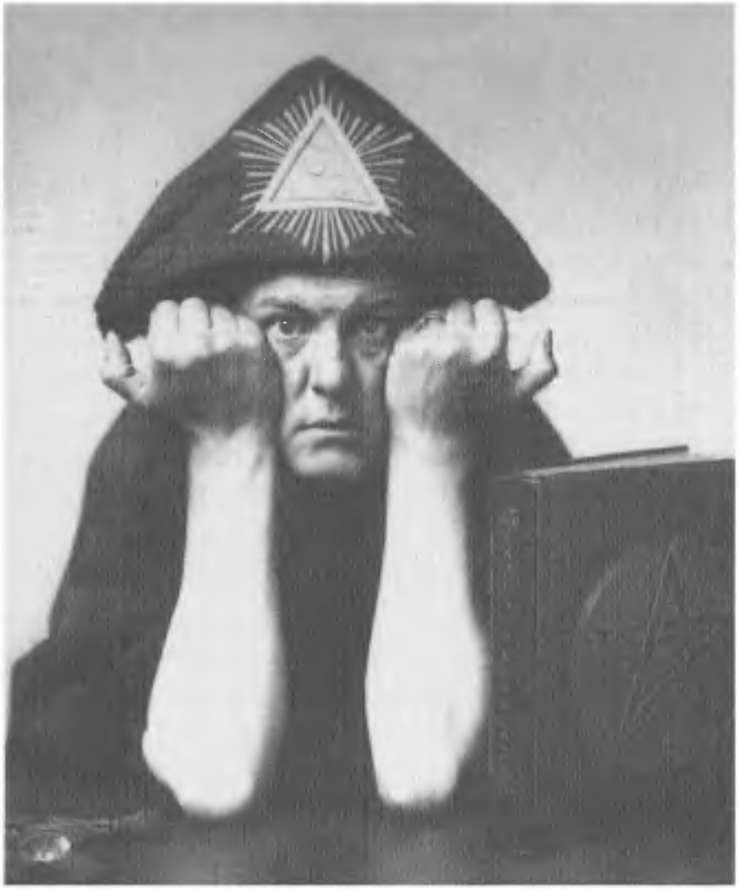


Figure 8. Aleister Crowley. Courtesy of Ordo Templi Orientis.

and homosexuality, as central components in his magical practice. Not surprisingly, he soon became a favorite target of the popular press of the early twentieth century. As various papers described him, he was known for his "criminal excesses and revolting debauchery," his "cesspool of vice," which included "blasphemous and bestial ceremonies—or orgies"[3] and amounted to nothing more than a "symposium of obscenity, blasphemy, and indecency."[4] In one of the more entertaining accounts of the Beast, *My Life in a Love Cult: A Warning to All Young Girls,* Crowley is portrayed as a Sadistic Satanist whose main philosophy is "All is evil. Evil is right. Let evil prevail!"[5]

In this chapter, I will suggest that Crowley is a figure of far more interest than the mere hedonistic sex fiend portrayed by the popular media. Indeed, he is a fascinating figure worthy of attention by scholars of religion and of profound importance for the understanding of modern society as a whole. This importance is threefold. First, with his radical rejection of Victorian morality and his emphasis on sex as the supreme source of magical power, Crowley is a remarkable reflection of his era and of the sexual attitudes of late Victorian England.[6] Second, with his study of Hinduism and Buddhism, he was a key figure in the transmission of Indian traditions to the West, including the controversial traditions of Tantra. Finally, in part because of this incorporation of Eastern traditions, Crowley has also been one of the most influential figures in the revival of magic and a variety of alternative religions at the turn of the new millennium.

By the late nineteenth century, as we saw in the last chapter, the two currents of Western sexual magic and somewhat mutilated forms of Indian Tantra had begun to mingle, fuse, and often become hopelessly confused. Crowley in many ways represents the culmination of this (con)fusion of Tantra and sexual magic. As John Symonds remarks, "His greatest merit was to make the bridge between Tantrism and the Western esoteric tradition and thus bring together Western and Eastern magical techniques."[7] Yet ironically, Crowley seems to have known little more about actual Tantric practice than did Theodor Reuss or most other Western adepts.[8] What he did know came through secondary, superficial, and distorted sources that are deeply colored by the Orientalist biases of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, not long after his death, Tantra would soon be largely confused in the popular imagination with Crowleyian-style sex magick.[9] Ironically, despite his general ignorance about the subject, and without ever intending to do so, Crowley became a key figure in the transformation and misinterpretation of Tantra in the West, where it would be largely detached from its cultural context and increasingly identified with sex.

In order to understand Crowley's highly influential form of sexual magic, I think we need to place it within the historical context of the late and post-Victorian world in which he lived. As Michel Foucault, Michael Mason, and others have argued, the post-Victorian era witnessed an intense reaction against the prudery and hypocrisy of the nineteenth century. From D. H. Lawrence and Oscar Wilde to Havelock Ellis, many British intellectuals were throwing off the sexual shackles of their Victorian parents and embracing a new ideal of erotic liberation, including the most "deviant" and "abnormal" acts such as masturbation and homosexual intercourse.[10]

Crowley's writings on sexuality and magic, I will suggest, were a key part of this larger fascination with sexuality in the early twentieth century.[11] Yet Crowley would also push this discourse about sexuality a good deal further than most of his contemporaries had dared, not just defying but deliberately violating the most sacred sexual taboos. Here I will employ, but also seriously critique, some of the insights of Georges Bataille, and particularly his concept of transgression.[12] Crowley, I will argue, hoped to find in deliberate acts of transgression a radical kind of superhuman power, one that went well beyond the transgressive rites performed by Reuss and the early Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO)—indeed, a power that could explode the boundaries of Western society and open the way for a new era of history. Yet despite his often outrageous acts, Crowley still remained caught in an endless dialectic of transgression and taboo, never really transcending his own Victorian childhood. To conclude, I will suggest that Crowley was in many ways a deeply ambivalent, Janus-faced figure, a kind of "beast with two backs"; not only did he reflect his own generation and the sexual anxieties of the late Victorian era, but he foreshadowed our own era and our sexual obsessions at the dawn of the new millennium.

THE NEW AEON: CROWLEY AND THE END OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

> It is sex. How wonderful sex can be, when men keep it powerful and sacred, and it fills the world! like sunshine through and through one!
> D. H. LAWRENCE, *The Plumed Serpent*

> [T]o us Victoria was sheer suffocation. . . . She was a huge and heavy fog; we could not see, we could not breathe. . . . [T]he spirit of her age had killed everything we cared for. . . . The soul of England was stagnant, stupefied!
> *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*

If figures like P. B. Randolph reflect many of the key trends in Victorian culture of the mid-nineteenth century, Crowley is a striking exemplar of the sexual attitudes of the late and post-Victorian era. As Pamela Thurschwell observes, much of the occult literature at the turn of the twentieth century reflects the larger cultural contradictions surrounding sex and gender, and particularly issues like homosexuality and other "pathologies": "Deep and far-reaching anxieties about the stability of the traditional grounds of gender and sexuality pervade *fin-de-siècle* culture."[13] Crowley is a remarkable reflection of these sexual anxieties.

As we saw in the previous chapters, many nineteenth-century authors like Richard von Krafft-Ebing identified the sexual instinct as the most powerful force in human life, and so also the primary cause of psychological deviations. By the early twentieth century, this focus on sexuality achieved its most elaborate form in the work of Sigmund Freud and the early psychoanalytic movement—a movement that began to spread at exactly the same time that the Great Beast was developing his magickal system. Even more strongly than Krafft-Ebing, Freud identifies sex as the force is that is most "central to our sense of self" and in fact "the basis of both psychological and political identity."[14] For it is sexual love that gives us "our most intense experience of an overwhelming sensation of pleasure and has thus furnished us with a pattern for our search for happiness," including the search for eternal happiness through religious experience.[15] Repression or denial of the sexual instinct, conversely, is the root cause of most psychological problems, from neuroses and obsessions to full-blown psychoses.

> [M]an's discovery that sexual (genital) love afforded him the strongest experiences of satisfaction, and in fact provided him with the prototype of all happiness, must have suggested to him that he should continue to seek the satisfaction of happiness in his life along the path of sexual relations and that he should make genital eroticism the central point of his life.[16]

As we will see in chapter 6, many later Freudians would take these insights into sex and repression in a much more explicitly political direction. For authors like Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, sexual liberation would become the necessary analogue and prerequisite of liberation from totalitarian political regimes like Nazi Germany.[17]

This new interest in sexuality and liberation also began to pervade popular culture, literature, and the arts, particularly in late and post-Victorian England. As various scholars have observed, the first decades of the twentieth century gave birth to a powerful reaction against the sexual values of the Victorian era. This "deconstruction of Victorian morality" was caused, in part, by the radical challenge to traditional religious authority posed by Darwinian evolutionary theory and by a general loss of faith in the mainstream Protestant churches. If the traditional Christian God and church could no longer be trusted, why bother observing the strict sexual morality of the Victorians? Why not be wicked?

> After 1880 severe stresses appeared in the Victorian system of morality that heralded its demise. . . . The crisis of faith brought on by Darwinism and above all by the watering down of Protestantism was significant . . . the crucial ethical question became, what was the point of a lofty Victorian morality when life seemed to lack transcendent meaning? . . . Without religious structures, why not then behave badly?[18]

As we saw in the previous chapters, much of the discourse of the early Victorian era focused on the importance of heterosexual marriage for the stability of society. In an era that valued economic productivity, generation of capital, and restraint in consumption, healthy sexuality had to be useful and productive: "normal heterosexuality appeared in one guise . . . attraction between men and women that led to marriage and family. Normal sex was consistent with the values of Victorian industrial society—it was another mode of production."[19] Above all, "deviant"—that is, nonproductive—acts such as masturbation and homosexual intercourse were the most dangerous and antisocial of all pathologies; indeed, they "appeared to pose a threat not only to individuals but to society and even the nation."[20] Thus, in one of the more famous cases of 1895, Oscar Wilde was tried and imprisoned for his homosexual relations.

Yet by the early twentieth century, as we see in a wide array of authors like Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and D. H. Lawrence, there was a growing critique of the prudery of the Victorian age and an increasing call for social and sexual liberation. In Carpenter's words, "the strange period of human evolution, the Victorian Age . . . marked the lowest ebb of modern civilized society: a period in which . . . cant in religion, the impure hush on matters of sex . . . the cruel barring of women from every natural and useful expression of their lives, were carried to an extremity of folly difficult for us now to realise."[21] As the character Kate remarked in Lawrence's *Plumed Serpent*, quoted above, sex was believed to harbor some profound secret, the liberation of which was of tremendous, even sacred, power. Sex is thus the key to self-realization: "There has been so much action in the past, especially sexual action, a wearying repetition over and over, without . . . a corresponding realization. Now our business is to realize sex. Today the full realization of sex is even more important than the act itself."[22] Few figures would seek to realize this secret of sex more fully than would Aleister Crowley.

Unleashing the Beast: Crowley and the Post-Victorian Age

> He was . . . the inventor of a new religion, with its pseudo-teaching supposed to be derived from the medieval alchemists, and its licentious cult in which dark rooms, impressionable women and poems recited to throbbing music played their appointed part. . . . [T]he war which brought out the best in human nature, also forced the scum to the top, and Aleister Crowley is of the scum.
>
> "Another Traitor Trounced," *John Bull*

> I—I am his High Priestess! I am his Woman of Babylon! Not the scarlet woman of the putrid-minded, but the scarlet maiden of the Apocalypse, forever bound to him. . . . With his own dagger, white hot, he branded me his chattel forever! Ah, the exquisite agony! The joy!
>
> MARIAN DOCKERILL, *My Life in a Love Cult*

Born in 1875, the son of a member of the highly puritanical Plymouth Brethren sect, Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley embodied some of the deepest tensions in late Victorian society as a whole. A child raised in a strict Christian home, he would later turn to the occult arts and extremes of sexual excess. A prolific poet as well as an accomplished mountain climber, Crowley would also become one of the most reviled characters of the twentieth century. He has been described variously as "the King of Depravity, arch-traitor, debauchee and drug-fiend"[23] and "a perverse idealist, Master of the occult and slave to the demons he liberated."[24] Yet, as his most recent biographer Lawrence Sutin argues, Crowley was far more than a mere sadistic master of the black arts; not only was he a gifted poet, painter, and "master modernist" in his prose style, but he was also one of the first Western students of Buddhism and Yoga, and "one of the rare human beings . . . to dare to prophesy a distinctive new creed and to devote himself . . . to the promulgation of that creed."[25]

The details of Crowley's life are fairly well known, based on his autobiography and numerous popular biographies, so I won't reiterate all of them here. I will simply provide a brief sketch of his background and context. Educated at Trinity College in Cambridge, Crowley was from an early age fascinated with poetry and pagan religion and was a prolific author of verse and prose. While still a student at Cambridge he had published his first collection of poetry, *Aceldama,* and his notorious erotic collection, *White Stains* (1898). Having inherited a large amount of money while still young, he was financially independent for many years and spent much of his time pursuing his passions of writing and mountain climbing. During his Cambridge years, he would also adopt the name "Aleister," a Gaelic form of his middle name, Alexander, and an homage to the hero of Shelley's poem "Alastor, the Spirit of Solitude."

His first real initiation into the world of esotericism occurred in 1898, when he was introduced to a group known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Founded by William Westcott and MacGregor Mathers in 1887, the Golden Dawn was an eclectic blending of a number of older Western traditions, including Hermeticism, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and Kabbalah. An affluent and elite group, the Golden Dawn attracted a number of prominent artists, poets, and intellectuals, including W. B. Yeats. Eventually Crowley and Mathers would part ways and finally become mired in a lawsuit when Crowley published a full description of the secret rites of the Golden Dawn in his journal, *Equinox*.[26] Revealing secrets and sparking controversy, we will see, was something of an obsession throughout Crowley's life.

Beginning in 1899, Crowley also began to explore a variety of Eastern

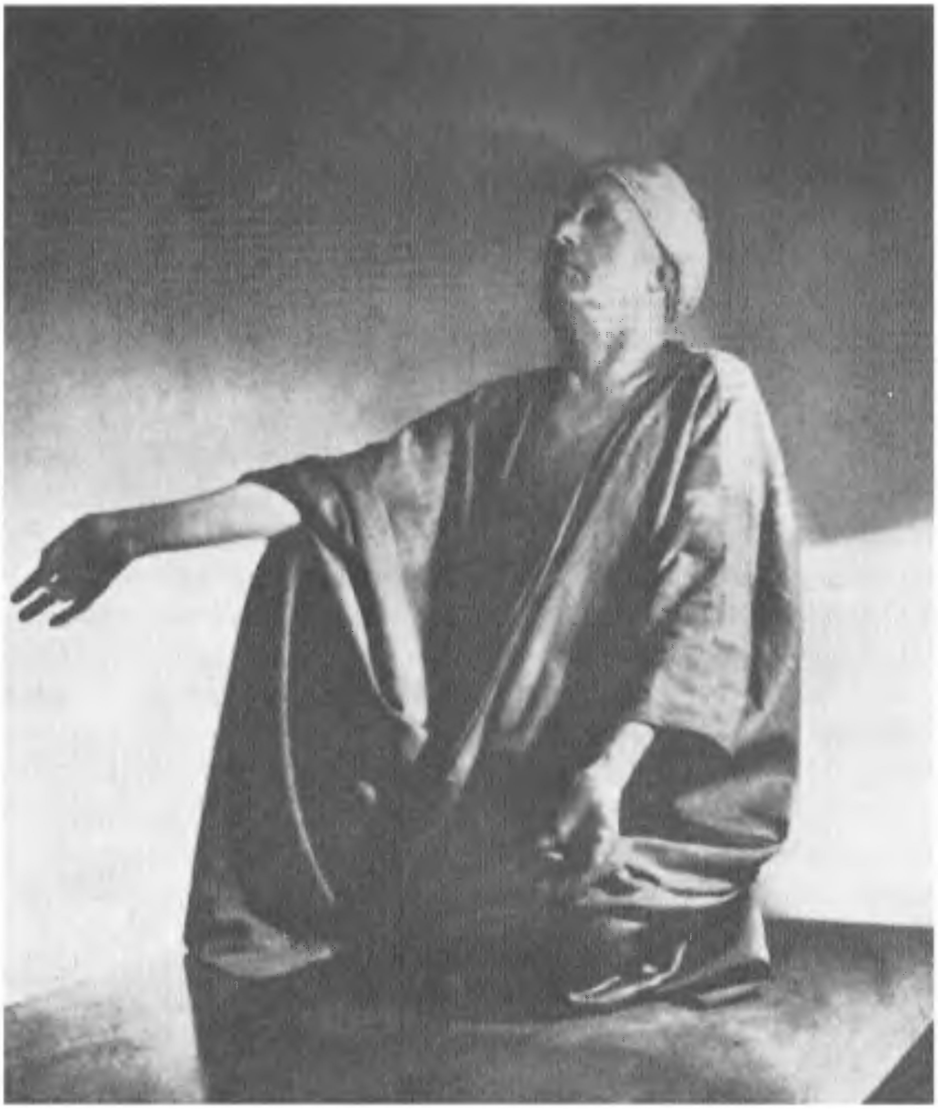


Figure 9. Aleister Crowley as "Mahatma Guru Sri Paramahansa Shivaji." Courtesy of Ordo Templi Orientis.

spiritual traditions. After studying Yoga in Mexico, he traveled to Ceylon and India in 1901–2, during which time he studied various forms of Buddhism and Hinduism. As we will see below, it seems possible that he also learned something of the esoteric techniques of Indian Tantra—though perhaps not as much as most contemporary adepts generally suppose.

However, it was in 1904 that Crowley would receive his first great revelation and the knowledge that he was to be the herald of a new era in human history. According to his own account, Crowley's guardian angel, Aiwass, appeared to him and dictated *The Book of the Law (Liber AL vel Legis)*.[27] His most famous work, *The Book of the Law* announces the dawn of the third aeon of mankind: the first aeon was that of the goddess Isis, centered around matriarchy and the worship of the Great Mother; the second aeon was that of Osiris, during which the patriarchal religions of suffering and death—that is, Judaism and Christianity—rose to power. Finally, with the revelation of the *Book of the Law,* a new aeon of the son, Horus, was born: "the old formulae of magick . . . the formulae of the dying God—is no longer efficacious. . . . The formulae of the new Aeon recognizes Horus, the Child, crowned and conquering, as God."[28]

Despite his claim that "every man and woman is a star," however, Crowley's ideal social order was far from egalitarian and in fact quite elitist. Rejecting the principles of democracy and equality as effete leftovers of Christianity, he asserted the power of the strong over the weak, the aristocratic few over the dull service masses. As he wrote in 1937 in his *Scientific Solution to the Problem of Government,* the true ruler has no use for absurdities such as *liberté, egalité, fraternité,* the idea that all men are equal or that woman is equal to man:

> The ruler asserts facts as they are; the slave has therefore no option but to deny them passionately, in order to express his discontent. . . . The Master (. . . the Magus) does not concern himself with facts . . . he uses truth and falsehood indiscriminately, to serve his ends. Slaves consider him immoral, and preach against him in Hyde Park.[29]

Crowley had high hopes that his new Law of Thelema would be adopted by the major political figures of his day and so become the foundation for a new social order of the future. According to his own notes, he clearly believed that the nation that first accepted the Book of the Law would become the leading nation the world. In fact, he initially saw Hitler and the rising power of fascism as a possible vehicle for spreading his Law of Thelema. He made copious marginal notes on Hitler's own writings, which he found much in agreement with his Law of Thelema; and he tried several times to have copies of his work placed in Hitler's hands, suggesting that it would provide "a philosophical basis for Nazism."[30] However, when his attempts to sway the Führer failed, Crowley tried just as eagerly to sell his Law of Thelema to the British government as the most necessary way to counter the German threat.[31]

The peak of Crowley's magical career—and of his infamy as the wickedest man in the world—was in the period after 1920, when he founded his own spiritual community called the Abbey of Thelema at a farmhouse in Cefalu, Sicily. The original inspiration derived from François Rabelais's classic *Gargantua* (1534), which describes an ideal spiritual community that would transcend the hypocritical corruption of the Christian monasteries. Called "Theleme" (from the Greek, meaning "will"), the rule of the community was "do what you will," in a joyous blending of Stoic virtue and Christian spirituality.[32] Crowley took Rabelais's ideal a good deal further, however, by creating a utopian community in which every desire could be gratified and every impulse expressed, through free experimentation in drugs, sex, and physical excess.

Perhaps the most infamous product of this period was the semiautobiographical novel *Diary of a Drug Fiend,* published in 1922. Written at top speed to fund his growing drug habit, the *Diary* is one of Crowley's most outrageous works but also one that provides the most insight into his character and historical context. A thinly disguised image of Crowley himself, the central character, Peter Pendragon, describes his rapid descent into cocaine and heroin addiction, as he careens through the affluent and wildly hedonistic life of the roaring twenties, exploring every possible sensual pleasure and moral vice. As Leslie Shepard observes,

> This book . . . comes from another world—an age of contrasts like a layer cake, with a thick wedge of orthodoxy, a thin covering of daring literary cream, and a certain amount of exotic jam. It was the world of censorship of taste and also the Jazz Age of petting parties, wild automobile rides, speak-easies, silent films. . . . Puritanism and interwar permissiveness lived side by side and made faces at each other.[33]

Ironically, Pendragon is finally redeemed by a mysterious figure named King Lamus, a thinly veiled mask of Crowley himself, who runs a spiritual center called the Abbey of Thelema in a far-off town called "Telepylus." In other words, the drug-addicted Crowley has portrayed himself as the character's own final savior and redemption.

By the 1940s, however, Crowley had exhausted not only his money (already largely spent by 1915) but also his once infinite will to power. Though he continued to believe that his *Book of the Law* might have a decisive role to play in the unfolding of global events during and after World War II, most people who saw him in those years described him as "a bored old man who found the lonely evenings frightening."[34] He spent his last years in a small guesthouse in London, increasingly addicted to heroin (taking as much as eleven grams a day, enough to kill most men) until his death in 1947. There are conflicting accounts of his final days: according to some hagiographic accounts, he slipped blissfully into the Buddhist state of final liberation, pass-

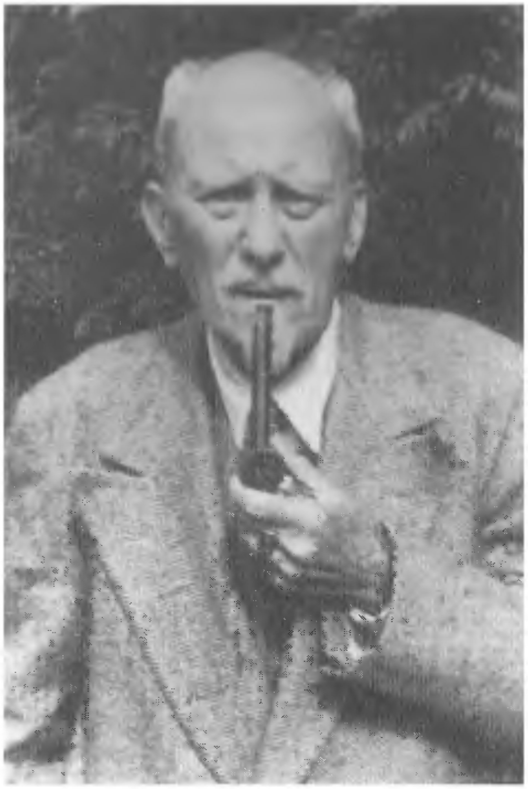


Figure 10. Aleister Crowley in his last years. Courtesy of Ordo Templi Orientis.

ing from "Samadhi to Super-Samadhi to Nirvana to Super Nirvana, expiring in the boundless bliss of the Infinite."[35] According to more cynical accounts, he died alone in misery and self-loathing, uttering the final words "sometimes I hate myself."[36] Still others say that he died quietly in bed, followed by a gust of wind and a peal of thunder—a sign that "the gods were greeting him."[37]

In sum, Crowley might be said to be a remarkable reflection of the era in which he was born. While deliberately setting out to overthrow all established values, he was perhaps only expressing the darker underside or "secret life" of the Victorian world in which he was raised:

> Crowley was a contemporary of Freud; he grew out of the matrix of Victorianism. . . . He was one of many who helped to tear down the false, hypocritical, self-righteous attitudes of the time. What is peculiar in Crowley's case is not that he chose evil but that in his revolt against his parents and God he set himself up in God's place.[38]

And perhaps nowhere was Crowley's simultaneous reflection of and revolt against the world in which he lived more apparent than in his volatile sexual life.

SEX IS A SACRAMENT: CROWLEY AND SEX MAGICK

> The sexual act is a sacrament of Will. To profane it is the great offense. All true expression of it is lawful; all suppression or distortion of it is contrary to the Law of liberty.
>
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *The Law Is for All*

Rejecting the effete morality of his Christian youth, Crowley deliberately set out to overturn what he saw as the oppressive, hypocritical attitudes of Victorian England. Going much further than Freud and the psychoanalytic movement, Crowley identified sex as not only the most central aspect of the human being (thus, in his *Book of Lies,* he points out that the English word for the pronoun "I" is itself a phallic shape),[39] but as the most profound source of magical power. As he wrote in his *Confessions,* the main reason for the violence and turmoil of the modern world lies in the repression of the sexual instinct, and conversely, the surest way to solve our contemporary problems lies in its liberation:

> The battle will rage most fiercely around the question of sex. . . . Mankind must learn that the sexual instinct is . . . ennobling. The shocking evils which we all deplore are principally due to the perversions produced by suppressions. The feeling that it is shameful and the sense of sin cause concealment, which is ignoble, and internal conflict which creates distortion, neurosis, and ends in explosion. We deliberately produce an abscess and wonder why it is full of pus . . . why it bursts in stench and corruption.
>
> The Book of the Law solves the sexual problem completely. Each individual has an absolute right to satisfy his sexual instinct as is physiologically proper for him.[40]

In many ways, Crowley was continuing and carrying to its logical conclusion the tradition of sexual magic that began with Randolph, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, and the Ordo Templi Orientis. In 1910, in fact, Crowley became involved with the OTO and soon became its most infamous member. According to Crowley's account, he was approached by Reuss, who had read a cryptic chapter of Crowley's *Book of Lies* and accused him of revealing the innermost secret of the OTO: the secret of sexual magic. Though Crowley had done so unintentionally, the story goes, he was named the Sovereign Grand Master General of Ireland, Ioana, and all the Britains. As Crowley suggests, this secret is so powerful and "of such tremendous import," that it "cannot be used indiscriminately" or revealed to the unworthy.[41] As he described it in his *Confessions,* "if this secret which is a scientific secret were perfectly understood . . . there would be nothing which the human imagination can conceive that could not be realized in practice. . . . If it were desired to have an element of atomic weight six times that of uranium that element could be produced."[42]

Crowley developed a number of new rituals for the OTO, including a full-scale Gnostic Mass. An elaborate, highly choreographed ceremony, the Mass is a kind of creative reimagining of the secret rites alleged to have been practiced by the early Gnostics and later corrupted by the Catholic Church. Although there is no physical intercourse involved in the Mass, its symbolism is highly sexual. The primary actors are the priest, who parts a sacred veil with his "lance," and the priestess, who removes her robes to embody the nakedness of the divine female principle. As the priestess proclaims in the "ceremony of the opening of the veil," "I love you! I yearn to you! Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous, I who am all pleasure and purple, and drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you. Put on the wings and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me! To me! To me! Sing the rapturous love-song unto me! Burn to me perfumes! Wear to me jewels! Drink to me, for I love you! I love you."[43] The Mass also involves the consumption of wine and "cakes of light," and it is perhaps worth noting the ingredients for the latter. According to the recipe provided in the *Book of the Law,* they are to be made with "meal & honey & thick leavings of red wine: then oil of Abramelin and olive oil" and softened with fresh blood. As for this last ingredient, menstrual blood is the preferred form: "The best blood is of the moon, monthly: then the fresh blood of a child . . . then of enemies; then of the priest or of the worshippers: last of some beast."[44]

In addition to developing the Gnostic Mass and other elaborate ceremonies, Crowley also revised the OTO's hierarchy of initiatory degrees, expanding them from ten to eleven. The eighth, ninth, and eleventh of these focused on more explicitly transgressive sexual rites of autoerotic and homosexual intercourse. As Peter Koenig summarizes the upper degrees,

> Crowley's VIIIth degree unveiled . . . that masturbating on a sigil of a demon or meditating upon the image of a phallus would bring power or communication with a divine being. . . . The IXth degree was labeled heterosexual intercourse where the sexual secrets were sucked out of the vagina and when not consumed . . . put on a sigil to attract this or that demon to fulfill the pertinent wish. . . . In the XIth degree, the mostly homosexual degree, one identifies oneself with an ejaculating penis. The blood (or excrements) from anal intercourse attract the spirits/demons while the sperm keeps them alive.[45]

As we can see, Crowley's practice of sexual magic represents a radical departure from the rather prudish system of P. B. Randolph, even more extreme than that of Reuss and the early OTO, that is much more willing to use a wide variety of nonheterosexual forms of sex magick. Indeed, his sexual palate was quite eclectic. In addition to more mundane heterosexual acts, his magic sampled a smorgasbord of techniques, including "mentally meditating on his penis—masturbating—while thinking of gods and angels; consecrating talismans with combinations of semen, vaginal juices and menstrual blood; prolonging and intensifying sex through visualization . . . beseeching gods for information, money and material possessions during sex."[46]

Yet, much like Randolph, Crowley does suggest a wide range of both material and spiritual uses for sexual magic. Between 1914 and 1918, Crowley's own diary, *Rex de Arte Regia*, records a long series of 309 acts of sexual magic for a variety of purposes. These included both spiritual aims, such as offering praise to Pan or attaining supernatural powers, and more material aims, such as fascinating mistresses or enhancing his youth and sexual attraction. Of these, the largest number (48) were employed for the purpose of generating money. Increasingly worried about his own finances, Crowley developed a sexo-economic technique of imagining a shower of gold coins raining down at the moment of climax. At least in his opinion, this worked, since he claimed to receive several unexpected checks and offers showing up out of the blue.[47] Like Randolph, he would also begin marketing his sexual magick in a various ways; perhaps the most blatant was his attempt to sell "Elixir Pills" containing his own semen in a neutral base, which were advertised as a virility enhancers.[48]

Whatever its form, however, this secret of sexual magic was the key to Crowley's vision of a new aeon based on full affirmation of the will and liberation from the repressive religions of the past. Indeed, Crowley takes the "repressive hypothesis" and the urge to sexual freedom to its furthest extreme: for he not only proclaims the liberation of sexuality from the prudish bonds of his Victorian childhood, but he also makes the most deviant and antisocial of sexual acts—masturbation, consumption of sexual fluids, and homosexual intercourse—the ultimate keys to magical power. In other words, he hoped to usher in his own new aeon by tearing down the entire social-moral structure of the world in which he was raised.[49]

THE EYE OF SHIVA: CROWLEY AND TANTRA

> Shiva, the Destroyer, is asleep, and when he opens his eye the universe is destroyed. . . . But the "eye" of Shiva is also his Lingam [phallus]. Shiva is himself the Mahalingam, which unites these symbolisms. The opening of the eye, the ejaculation of the Lingam, the destruction of the universe, the accomplishment of the Great Work—all these are different ways of saying the same thing.
>
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *The Book of Lies*

> [P]aradoxical as it may sound, the Tantrics are in reality the most advanced of the Hindus.
>
> ALEISTER CROWLEY

Already in the work of Carl Kellner, Reuss, and the early O.T.O., Western sexual magic had begun to be mingled with the recently discovered traditions of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. But it is Crowley's form of sexual magic that most Westerner readers now think of when they hear the word *Tantra*. As we will see, however, this association of Crowley and Tantra may turn out to be a good deal more spurious and unfounded than most authors have generally assumed.

Most of Crowley's biographers have assumed that he had some direct knowledge of Hindu Tantra, which he then fused with his own magical practice. As his disciple Kenneth Grant put it, "The revival of Tantric elements in the *Book of the Law* may be evidence of a positive move on the part of [Crowley] to forge a link between Western and Oriental systems of magick."[50] But the question is, how much did Crowley really know about Indian Tantric traditions—that is, beyond the secondhand comments and bursts of moral outrage about Tantric licentiousness that were common in Orientalist scholarship?

It is true that Crowley did have a reasonably good knowledge of Indian Yoga, including both the *raja* (royal) Yoga of Patanjali and the physical practice focused on bodily postures known as *hatha yoga*. His *Eight Lectures on Yoga*—or "Yoga for Yahoos," as he described it—displays a competent grasp of the classical Yoga system and would become one of the first vehicles through which Yoga was transmitted to the West.[51] And it is also true that he made frequent use of key Sanskrit terms, such as *lingam* and *yoni*, the male and female sexual organs, to explain his own magical practice. In fact, he records in his *Confessions* that it was the Indian worship of the *lingam* that helped change his attitudes toward sex and to see that the sexual organ can be a source of spiritual power. Unlike repressed and neurotic modern Western society, India had long known the inherent divinity of sexuality and the human body;

> One of the great insights of South India is the great Temple of the Shiva lingam. I spent a good deal of time in its courts meditating on the mystery of Phallic worship. . . . My instinct told me that Blake was right in saying: "The lust of the goat is the glory of God." But I lacked the courage to admit it. The result of my training had been to obsess me with the hideously foul idea that inflicts such misery on Western minds and curses life with civil war. Europeans cannot face the facts frankly, they cannot escape from their animal appetite, yet suffer the tortures of fear and shame even while gratifying it. As Freud has now shown, this devastating complex is not merely responsible for most of the social and domestic misery of Europe and America, but exposes the individual to neurosis. . . . We resort to suppression, and the germs create an abscess.[52]

Crowley eventually came to have a certain respect for Indian Tantric traditions as well. Unlike most of the Orientalist scholars of his day, who denounced Tantra as a horrible perversion, Crowley described Tantra as a valid form of religion, and in fact as the "most advanced" of all forms of Indian spirituality. Unlike other forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, Tantra does not deny the physical body but affirms and makes use of the flesh and the senses:

> The essence of the Tantric cults is that by performance of certain rites of Magick, one does not only escape disaster, but obtains positive benediction. The Tantric is not obsessed by the will-to-die. . . . [H]e implicitly denies the proposition that existence is sorrow and he formulates the postulate . . . that means exist by which the universal sorrow . . . may be unmasked.[53]

One of the most explicit references to Tantric sexual practices in Crowley's work is found in his key text for the OTO IX degree rite, *De Arte Magica.* Here Crowley specifically compares the Tantric view of the semen and the rite of *maithuna* with the IX degree rite and also demonstrates that he is familiar with at least one Tantric text:

> [T]he wise men of India have a belief that a certain particular Prana, or force, resides in the Bindu, or semen. . . .
>
> Therefore they stimulate to the maximum its generation by causing a consecrated prostitute to excite the organs, and at the same time vigorously withhold by will. After some little exercise they claim that they can deflower as many as eighty virgins in a night without losing a single drop of the Bindu. Nor is this ever to be lost, but reabsorbed through the tissues of the body. The organs thus act as a siphon to draw constantly fresh supplies of life from the cosmic reservoir. . . .
>
> Initiates will notice also that these heathen philosophers have made one further march towards the truth when they say that the Sun and Moon must be united before the reabsorption (see almost any Tantra, in particular Shiva Sanhita).[54]

For these reasons, many authors have speculated that Crowley did have some extensive knowledge of Tantra. Sutin suggests that Crowley may have first been introduced to the more radical left-hand (*vamachara*) form of Tantra in Ceylon as early 1901. Infamous for its use of normally forbidden substances, such as meat, wine, and sexual intercourse, *vamachara* Tantra is considered the most rapid and dangerous path to liberation.[55] Initially, Crowley seems to have been repulsed by such practices, for example, when he wrote with disdain about "these follies of . . . Vamacharya."[56] However, Sutin goes on to argue that Crowley's attitudes toward Tantra became a good deal more positive in the years after 1901 and that he began to experiment in Tantric sexual rites of his own. Already by 1902, Sutin suggests, Crowley and his partner, Rose, had begun to engage in a series of "secret rites of a sexual nature (and related to Tantric practices, such as the emulation of the passive Shiva in cosmic coupling with the mounted energetic Shakti)."[57] Unfortunately, Sutin provides no evidence that Crowley and Rose were engaging in any sort of actual Tantric practices or that their sexual relations were in any way influenced by Tantra.

Others have speculated that Crowley was even more deeply involved in left-hand Tantric rituals during his travels in India. In 1936, for example, Elizabeth Sharpe published a semiautobiographical account entitled *Secrets of the Kaula Circle*, which describes a mysterious Englishman calling himself by the number "666," who engages in the most esoteric Tantric rites: "I met a European who . . . called himself by a number. In the beginning he was extremely handsome, afterwards he grew gross. . . . He had many women at his disposal. . . . He learnt many magical processes by which he drew into his circle great phantoms. . . . 666 wore a ceremonial robe, had a pentacle, a wand, a sword and a cup."[58] At least one author has taken this to be positive proof that Crowley had intimate knowledge of and experience in Tantric practice.[59] However, given the fact that Sharpe's novel was published at a time when Crowley's reputation as a pervert, black magician, and drug fiend was quite widespread, it seems equally likely that Sharpe appropriated the figure of the infamous "Beast 666," mingled him with some widespread fantasies about Tantric licentiousness, and incorporated him as a fictional character into her novel.

But apart from these general references, it would seem that Crowley's actual knowledge of Tantra was fairly rudimentary and largely colored by the Orientalist biases of his era. It is indeed striking, for example, that Crowley does not once mention the work of Sir John Woodroffe (also known as Arthur Avalon), whose work, as we saw in chapter 3, pioneered the modern study of Tantra and helped introduce it to the Western world. One would think that Crowley would have welcomed the publication of a large body of ancient literature that allows for a positive role for sexual experience and this-worldly pleasure, and one cannot help but wonder why he completely ignored it in his own writings on sexual magic.

Moreover, in the few places where he does discuss Tantric practices, Crowley frequently either misunderstands or simply reinterprets them for his own purposes. For example, most Tantric traditions use a form of physical discipline known as Kundalini Yoga. According to the Kundalini system, there are a series of seven energy centers (chakras) located along the axis of the spinal column. At the base of these lies the Great Goddess as power (Shakti) hidden in the human body, which is imagined in the form of a coiled serpent (Kundalini). The aim of Kundalini Yoga is to awaken this serpent power and to raise it through the seven energy centers where it will ultimately be united with the supreme masculine principle, the god Shiva, who is imagined as dwelling in a thousand-petaled lotus at the top of the head. Crowley more or less accepts this basic system of seven chakras and the serpent power; yet, quite remarkably, he also adds a special set of *lower chakras* located *beneath* the lowest energy center, in the regions of the anus, the prostate gland (or urethra-cervix region in the female), and the base of the penis (or clitoris in the female). In other words, he has added a series of subchakras that are explicitly associated with the sexual organs and orifices. As he explains in a letter in 1916,

> It appears that a special set of nadis [nerves] fed the Muladhara lotus as if it had three roots. The source of these roots is in the three centres. . . . But they are not lotuses of the same order as the sacred Seven. . . .
>
> The anal lotus is of eight petals, deep crimson, glowing to rich poppy color when excited. . . .
>
> The prostatic lotus is like a peridot, extremely translucent and limpid. . . . The petals are numerous, I think thirty-two.
>
> The third lotus is in the *glans penis,* close to the base. . . . It is of a startlingly rich purple. . . . The centre is gold like the sun. . . .
>
> In the female . . . these three lotuses also exist, but in a very different form. . . . [T]he second of the chakras is situated between the urethra and the *cervix uteri.* . . . [I]ts color is neutral grey but in pregnancy it becomes a brilliant orange and flowerlike. . . .
>
> The third lotus is at the base of the clitoris. . . . The petals are forty-nine in number. . . . The basic color is a rich olive green, sometimes kindling to emerald.[60]

This passage is a telling example of Crowley's appropriation and reinterpretation of Tantra. Not only does he identify Tantra primarily with its sexual aspects, but, going still further, he also introduces his own series of subchakras identified specifically with the sexual organs.

However, perhaps the greatest difference between the Crowleyian and Tantric systems is the role of sexual intercourse in ritual practice. But here again there is some confusion. Some authors have suggested that the primary difference lies in the way in which the sexual acts are carried out and the manner in which sexual union occurs. Thus Sutin argues that the key difference is that the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrics call for a retention and sublimation of the male semen during union, while Crowley calls for the ejaculation and consumption of the sexual fluids (in fact, Crowley himself pointed this out in *De Arte Magica,* chapters 14 and 16):

> Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism . . . call for retention of semen by the male, even in the heights of mystical sexual union. Crowley followed that alchemical tradition which regarded the fluidic commingling as an "elixir" which, when imbibed, could heighten both one's physical and spiritual state."[61]

Actually, this is not quite correct. It is true that later Tantric texts emphasize retention of semen during union, but as we saw in the previous chapter, there are many Hindu Tantric traditions—and arguably, the *older* traditions—that call for ejaculation of the semen and consumption of the combined male and female sexual fluids. As David Gordon White has argued, this practice of orally consuming the sexual fluids can be found in many of the oldest Tantras and probably predates the practice of seminal retention.[62]

Instead, I would suggest that the key difference between traditional forms of Tantra and Crowley's system lies not in the details of sexual union but rather in *the emphasis that is placed on sex in the first place.* In most Hindu and Buddhist Tantras, sexual union is a fairly minor part of spiritual practice; when mentioned at all, it is often taken in symbolic terms and, when practiced literally, is but one of many ways of awakening the divine power or Shakti. As N. N. Bhattacharyya observes, "Most modern writers . . . insist solely on its sexual elements, minimal though they are compared to the vastness of the subject, and purport to popularize certain modern ideas pertaining to sex problems in the name of Tantra."[63] But in most contemporary Western interpretations—and above all, in the wake of Crowley—Tantra has been redefined primarily by its sexual element and often simply equated with "spiritual sex," the goal of which is primarily heightened orgasm and optimal physical pleasure.

In the end, it seems there is little concrete evidence that Crowley had any extensive knowledge of Indian Tantra, apart from the common association of Tantra and sex in the Western imagination. So how, then, did Crowley's work come to be so widely identified with Tantra in later literature? The answer lies primarily, I think, in the work of Crowley's earliest biographers, such as John Symonds and Kenneth Grant. In fact, Grant claimed to have received "full initiation into a highly recondite formula of the Tantric *vama marg*" at the hands of one David Curwen, who in turn claimed to have been initiated by a Tantric guru in South India. Having met Crowley in 1944 and studying with him in 1945, Grant would go on to write a series of books on Crowley and magic, which repeatedly emphasize the "Tantric" nature of Crowley's work. Thus, *The Book of the Law* is even praised as "the New Gnosis, the latest Tantra," and Crowley is credited with having penetrated the innermost secrets of Tantric sexual practices (which Grant also compares with the orgasm theory of Wilhelm Reich): "Crowley knew that the crux of tantric ritual lay in its connection with the magically induced ecstasies of sexual orgasm."[64] Ultimately, Grant finds in Tantra the confirmation of the central tenet of Crowley's Law of Thelema—the fundamental belief in the divinity of the human will: "Another point of contact between Tantra and Thelema is contained in the Thelemic aphorism: There is no god but man!"[65]

But ironically, despite his attempts to read Crowley through a Tantric lens, even Grant admits that Crowley's actual knowledge of Tantric practice was limited. Thus he recounts Crowley's correspondence with David Curwen. Apparently Crowley, rather annoyed that Curwen possessed far greater knowledge, was forced to admit that "Curwen knows 100 times as much as I do abut Tantra."[66] Indeed, Curwen claimed to have a recipe for preparing the prized "Elixir of Life" that was far superior to that of the OTO: "The O.T.O. lacked some vital keys to the real secret of magick which Crowley claimed to have incorporated into the higher degrees. Curwen undoubtedly knew more about these matters than did Crowley."[67]

But regardless of Crowley's actual knowledge of Tantra, virtually everyone writing on the subject since the time of Grant and Symonds has accepted this basic identity of Crowleyian magic and Tantra.[68] Crowley's version of the tradition and, above all, his identification of Tantra with its sexual component would have a formative impact on virtually all later forms of sex magic in the West.

Leashing and Unleashing the Beast: Taboo, Transgression, and Power

> In my Mass the Host is of excrement, that I can consume in awe and adoration.
>
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *The Magical Record of the Beast 666*

> Transgression contains nothing negative but affirms limited being; affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time.
>
> MICHEL FOUCAULT, "Preface to Transgression"

So what are we to make of Crowley's scandalous and deliberately shocking sexual practices? Were they merely the expression of a perverse and hedonistic character who hoped to satiate every carnal desire? Or were they simply a crude form of sympathetic magic designed to bring him material gain, wealth, and power?

Here I would suggest that the power of Crowley's sexual magick lay primarily in its explicit and deliberate acts of *transgression*—and transgression as understood specifically in the terms developed by the influential philosopher and novelist Georges Bataille (1897–1962).[69] As we saw in the previous chapter, both Indian Tantra and the early OTO used various acts of transgression in their rituals, deliberately violating social and sexual taboos as a source of magical power. Yet Crowley would take this urge to transgression even further than Reuss or any Indian Tantrikas would have dared, in what Bradford Verter calls a kind of "queering of the occult," or a turn to deviant, antisocial forms of sexual practice.[70]

From Oscar Wilde's homosexual scandals to D. H. Lawrence's highly erotic novels, the late Victorian era gave birth to many experiments in sexual transgression, challenging both traditional religious belief and the social order that it supported. As Foucault suggests in his essay on Bataille, the rise of sexuality in the twentieth century is closely associated with the "death of God" and the declining power of traditional religious belief. Today we are less and less able to find radical, ecstatic, liberating experiences through conventional religious institutions; instead, we find it now primarily through sexual experience, and particularly through sexual transgression: "with the death of God transgression acquires a different character than before, because now it is transgression itself that is God, most pronounced . . . in what we call sex—that secret that we are henceforth doomed to always speak about precisely because it is secret."[71]

As Bataille uses the term, transgression is not simple hedonism or unrestrained sexual license; rather, its power lies in the dialectic, or "play" (*le jeu*), between taboo and transgression, through which one systematically constructs and then oversteps all laws. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of eroticism. Not a matter of simple nudity, eroticism arises in the dialectic of veiling and revealing, clothing and striptease, between the creation of sexual taboos and the exhilarating experience of overstepping them. So, too, in ecstatic mystical experience or religious rites (such as blood sacrifices, carnivals, etc.), one must first create an aura of purity and sanctity before one can defile it with violence, transgression, or the overturning of law. "The prohibition is there to be violated"; rules are made to be broken, for it is the experience of overstepping limits that brings the blissful sense of continuity and communion with the Absolute:

> [T]aboos . . . are not only there to be obeyed. . . . It is always a temptation to knock down a barrier. . . . Fear invests [the forbidden act] with an aura of excitement. "There is nothing," writes de Sade, "that can set bounds to licentiousness. . . . The best way of enlarging and multiplying one's desires is to try to limit them."[72]

The ultimate aim of transgression, however, is not mere sensual pleasure; rather, it is the transgression of the very boundaries of the self, an expenditure (*dépense*) without hope of any return, which shatters the limits of finite human consciousness in order to experience the boundless continuity of the Infinite. It is this experience of transgression and expenditure that links eroticism intimately to the ultimate experience of infinite continuity, that of death:

> Eroticism . . . is assenting to life up to the point of death. . . . Although erotic activity is . . . an exuberance of life, the object of this psychological quest . . . is not alien to death.
>
> Erotic activity, by dissolving the separate beings that participate in it, reveals their fundamental continuity, like the waves of a stormy sea.[73]

Nowhere is this fundamental dialectic between taboo and transgression more apparent than in the case of Crowley. Indeed, Crowley found liberating transgression not just "in the absence of God," but rather *in his own attempt to destroy God* and usher in a new era of history. Quite self-consciously overthrowing the restraints of the Victorian Christian world in which he was raised, Crowley made it his mission to shatter the boundaries of conventional morality in order to liberate the supreme freedom of the self. Thus, "The qualities which have made a man, a race, a city, a caste, must be thrown off. . . . All moral codes are worthless in themselves."[74]

The true magus is therefore encouraged to seek out the most disgusting, repugnant, and impure sorts of partners for his sexual rites. Indeed, "the supreme masters of the world seek ever the vilest and most horrible creatures for their concubines, overstepping even the limited laws of sex and species in their necessity to transcend normality."[75] And, in turn, his sexual partners are to take a vow that demanded the explicit violation of all moral boundaries that confine ordinary beings, embracing the role of the wicked, adulterous Whore of Babalon herself:

> I will work the work of wickedness
>
> I will kill my heart
>
> I will be loud and adulterous
>
> I will be covered with jewels and rich garments.
>
> I will be shameless before all men
>
> I will, for token thereof, freely prostitute my body to the lusts of each and every living creature that shall desire it
>
> I claim the Mystery of Mysteries, BABALON the Great, and the Number 156, and the robe of the Woman of Whoredomes and the Cup of Abominations.[76]

As we have seen above, many of Crowley's higher-level rituals centered around acts that were considered extremely transgressive by Victorian moral standards. Sodomy and masturbation were foremost among the acts considered both physically and morally dangerous in Victorian society, and they would therefore become among the most powerful tools in Crowley's magical practice. The original preface to his *The World's Tragedy* was in fact subtitled "Sodomy," in which he vowed "to fight openly for that which no living Englishman dared defend, even in secret—sodomy!"[77]

However, even Crowley's heterosexual rites would have been considered somewhat against the grain of Victorian sexual values. As we have already seen, many of his practices involved deliberate inversions of "normal" sexual intercourse, such as the consumption of sexual fluids, which were regarded as the powerful "elixir" employed in many of the IX degree operations.[78] In some cases, Crowley seems to have truly exulted in his own depravity, going to great lengths to describe his descent into licentious transgression. As he described his relations with his partner, Ronnie Minor, in 1918, "I now do all those things which voluptuaries do, with equal or greater enthusiasm and power; but always for an Ulterior End. In this matter I am reproached by that whore of niggers and dogs, with whom I am now living in much worse than adultery."[79] Similarly, as he described his relations with a young American, Cecil Frederick Russell, who come to study with him in 1921 and became a partner in his sexual magic,

> Now I'll shave and make up my face like the lowest kind of whore and rub on perfume and go after Genesthai [Russell] like a drunken two-bit prick-pit in old New Orleans. He disgusts me sexually, as I him, as I suspect. . . . [T]he dirtier my deed, the dearer my darling will hold me; the grosser the act the greedier my arse to engulph him![80]

Crowley would go to even further extremes of transgression during his years at the Abbey of Thelema. In his diaries, he claims to have transcended all material distinctions, shattering the boundary between pure and impure, such that even the most defiling substances—including human excrement—became for him the pure Body of God. Thus the shit of his Scarlet Woman, Leah Hirsig, became the "Thelemic Host" in his Gnostic Mass:

> My mouth burned; my throat choked, my belly wretched; my blood fled wither who knows. . . . She stood above in hideous contempt. . . . She ate all the body of God and with Her soul's compulsion made me eat. . . . My teeth grew rotten, my tongue ulcered, raw was my throat, spasm-torn my belly, and all my Doubt of that which to Her teeth was moonlight and to her tongue ambrosia; to her throat nectar, in her belly the One God.[81]

Much like Bataille, Crowley finds in sexual magick the most powerful means to shattering the limited rational mind and finite human ego. As he explains in "De Arte Magica," the most expedient technique for achieving this radical experience of transgression is that of *absolute exhaustion*, of pushing oneself to such extremes of sexual excess that one achieves a kind of "eroto-comatose lucidity." This is the ultimate fusion of orgasm and death:

> On the appointed day he is attended by one or more chosen . . . attendants whose duty is a) to exhaust him sexually by every known means b) to rouse him sexually by every known means. Every device and artifice of the courtesan is to be employed, and every stimulant known to the physician. . . . Finally the Candidate will sink into a sleep of utter exhaustion, resembling coma.
>
> The most favourable death is that occuring during the orgasm, and is called *Mors Justi*.[82]

Following Nietzsche, Crowley sees the rational, thinking mind as a kind of epiphenomenon and aberration of the true human self, which is bodily and instinctive; indeed, "Mind is a disease of semen." But in the moment of orgasm the rational mind is dissolved, allowing a fleeting glimmer of the divine: "man only rises to a glimmer of the universal consciousness, while, in the orgasm, the mind is blotted out."[83] This glimmer of universal consciousness in orgasm is the same miracle that is experienced in the transubstantiation of the elements in the Mass:

> The sexual act . . . is the agent which dissipates the fog of self for one ecstatic moment. It is the instinctive feeling that the physical spasm is symbolic of that miracle of the Mass, by which the material wafer . . . is transmuted into the substance of the body.[84]

Ultimately, in this moment of sexual excess, the self dissolves into the abyss of the Infinite, beyond all limitations:

> As man loses his personality in physical love, so does the magician annihilate his divine personality in that which is beyond.
>
> In love the individuality is slain. . . . Love death therefore, and long eagerly for it.
>
> Love destroyeth self. . . . Love breedeth All and None in One.[85]

Like Bataille, Crowley found in this radical transgression and shattering of rational thought the source of a tremendous, even superhuman power. The magus who dares to break the boundaries between pure and impure, the rational and the irrational, self and nothingness can unleash the ultimate magical energy and subdue all of reality to his own will:

> A Sorcerer by the power of his magick had subdued all things to himself. He could fly through space more swiftly than the stars. Would he eat, drink, and take his pleasure? There was none that did not obey his bidding. In the whole system of ten million times ten million spheres upon the two and twenty million planes he had his desire.[86]

However, the ultimate goal that Crowley sought through his sexual magic went far beyond the mundane desire for material wealth or mortal power. In his most exalted moments, Crowley believed that he could achieve a supreme spiritual power—the power to conceive a divine child, a godlike being, who would transcend the moral failings of the body born of mere woman. This goal of creating a divine fetus, Crowley suggests, lies at the heart of many esoteric traditions, from ancient Mesopotamia to India to the Arab world:

> This is the great idea of magicians in all times—To obtain a Messiah by some adaptation of the sexual process. In Assyria they tried incest. . . . Greeks and Syrians mostly bestiality. . . . The Mohammedans tried homosexuality; medieval philosophers tried to produce homunculi by making chemical experiments with semen. But the root idea is that any form of procreation other than normal is likely to produce results of a magical character.[87]

Sex magic, particularly in its transgressive, nonreproductive forms, can thus unleash the supreme creative power: the power to create not an ordinary fetus, but a magical child of messianic potential.

As we can see in this passage, however, Crowley seems to have regarded women as rather limited and ultimately expendable companions in spiritual practice. For Crowley, "Man is the guardian of the Life of God; woman but a temporary expedient; a shrine indeed for the God, but not the God."[88] Ultimately, because she lacks a penis and creative semen, woman can only

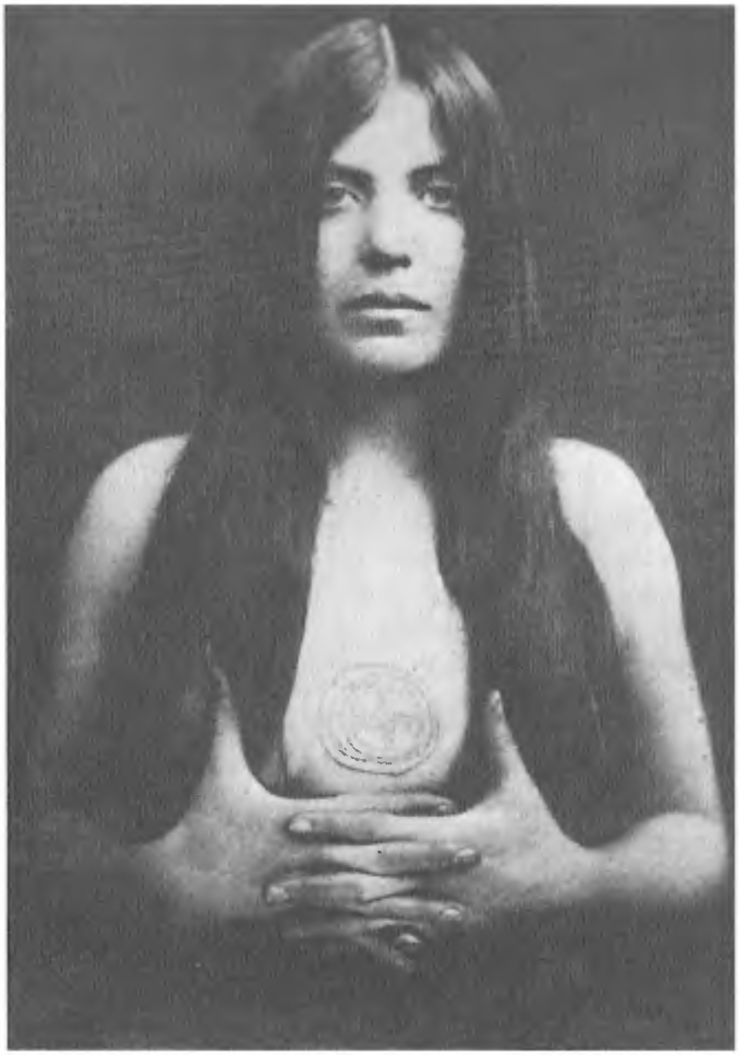


Figure 11. Leila Waddell, branded with the mark of the Beast.
Courtesy of Ordo Templi Orientis.

be an "assistant" who serves "at best as a blank, unwitting partner" in the operations of magick: "At a certain point, this expedient, this convenience, is no longer necessary. A dog will do."[89] Though he used a variety of "Scarlet Women" in his magical rites, he seems to have regarded the highest stages of practice as rituals of homosexual intercourse.[90] He was, moreover, notorious for his psychological and physical exploitation of women. At least one of his wives was left insane, and various other partners were left penniless and abandoned.

In this sense, the sort of transgression described by both Bataille and Crowley seems rather problematic and disturbing in the end. For transgression is usually tied, not just to ecstatic mystical experience or the liberating bliss of expenditure, but also to real relations of power; it often carries with it very negative effects in addition to its positive liberating ones. While transgression may be empowering and liberating for some individuals, it is often oppressive and exploitative for others (indeed, in his later work on economic and political history, *The Accursed Share,* Bataille seems to have a kind of romantic nostalgia for the good old days of human sacrifice and warfare, before the ecstatic power of transgressive violence was co-opted by modern capitalism).[91] In the case of Crowley's magick, these transgressive rituals were usually quite androcentric, arguably misogynistic, and exploitative of the female body. They were, moreover, tied to a larger social vision that was fundamentally elitist and nonegalitarian based on the power of the few strong individuals over the ignorant masses.

Perhaps even more troubling is the fact that transgression, for both Bataille and Crowley, seems inevitably locked in its own endless dialectic with the moral strictures of the taboo. In the "zigzagging incandescence of transgression" there is, apparently, "no end to unmasking."[92] There is, it would seem, no ultimate transcendence of the taboo; there is only the constant desire to transgress it and the momentary pleasure that it brings. If anything, the act of transgression does not contradict but in effect *exacerbates* the taboo. As various authors have observed, Crowley himself seems to have remained trapped in the prudish Victorian world in which he was raised, having dedicated himself to a relentless attempt to defy every one of its social and sexual taboos: "One of the glaring weaknesses in Crowley's practice of sex magic is his apparent inability to transcend his need to be a very bad boy. . . . [T]he Beast, for all his talk of liberation, seemed stuck in the futile recreation of the initial transgression of taboo . . . it is doubtful that he ever erased the 'sense of sin' he inherited from his puritanical Plymouth Brethren family."[93] Despite his most outrageous attempts to overthrow them, Crowley in many ways embodied and bore witness to the sexual values of his Victorian childhood.

Legacy of the Beast: Jack Parsons and the Birth of the Antichrist

> An end to the pretense, and lying hypocrisy of Christianity. . . . An end to prudery and shame, to guilt and sin, for these are of the only evil under the Sun, that is fear. . . . An end to restriction and inhibition, for I, the Antichrist, am come among you preaching the Word of the BEAST 666.
>
> JACK PARSONS, *The Book of AntiChrist*

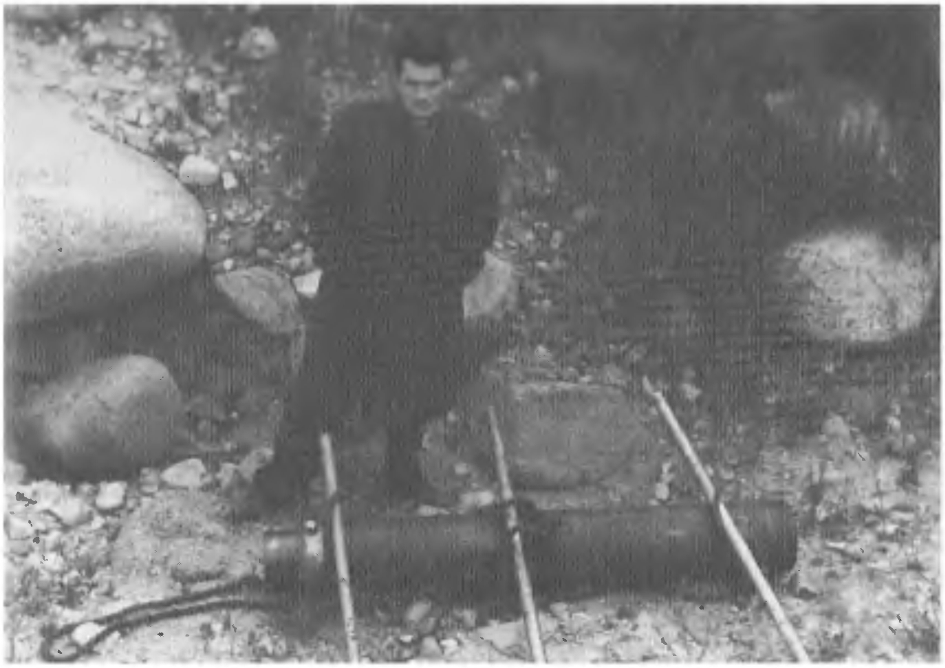


Figure 12. John Whiteside (Jack) Parsons. From John Carter, *Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons* (Venice, CA: Feral Press, 1999).

> Parsons opened a door, and something flew in.
> KENNETH GRANT, *Outside the Circles of Time*

No history of sexual magic, transgression, and the influence of Aleister Crowley would be complete without at least a brief mention of the bizarre story of Jack Whiteside Parsons (born Marvel Parsons, 1914–52). Called by some the "James Dean of the Occult," Parsons was a brilliant young engineer who helped develop rockets and explosives for the U.S. government and even had a crater on the moon named after him.[94] In addition to his scientific research, however, Parsons was an avid practitioner of the occult, who from 1941 on was deeply involved in the OTO's Agape Lodge in Southern California and became the most infamous American disciple of the Beast. A handsome and charming man, described as the "antithesis of the common image of a black magician," Parsons was also one of the main sources of money for the aging, drug-addicted Crowley.[95]

Parsons, it seems, was determined to put Crowley's most radical and transgressive ideals into living practice. The most remarkable of Parsons's ritual operations was his "Babalon Working," which had as its goal to shatter the boundaries of time and space in order to bring about the incarnation of the "magickal child," or Thelemic messiah, that Crowley had described as the herald of the New Aeon of Horus. Parsons's cohort in this operation was none other than L. Ron Hubbard, who would later go on to write the best-selling self-help manual *Dianetics* and found the Church of Scientology, one of the most lucrative new religious movements of the twentieth century. The first stage of the Babalon Working was designed to attract a female partner for Parsons, who could then assist him in his sex magic rites. The method used here was the OTO VIII degree ritual—that is, masturbation, with Parsons using his "magickal wand" to whip up a vortex of energy so that the elemental world could be summoned. Parsons apparently believed this ritual had worked successfully, since he shortly thereafter met a beautiful redhead named Marjorie Cameron, who agreed to participate in his magical rites.

The ultimate goal of these operations, carried out during February and March 1946, was to give birth to the magical being, or "moonchild," described in Crowley's works. Using the powerful energy of IX degree Sex Magick, the rites were intended to open a doorway through which the goddess Babalon herself might appear in human form. Incarnate as a living female, Babalon would then become the Scarlet Woman and consort of the Antichrist (a role Parsons would later claim for himself).[96] In a letter to Crowley, Parsons claimed that the operation had been successful, that he had in fact given birth to "One who is Holy and Beautiful," and that he was to act as her "guardian" for nine months: "Then it will be loosed in the world."[97]

Parsons would not, however, live to see his dream of the moonchild fulfilled. His spiritual cohort, Hubbard, turned out to be a devious charlatan who ran off with his partner Betty and $10,000 of his money (just a few years later founding the wildly successful Dianetics and Scientology enterprises). The aging Crowley, meanwhile, considered the whole affair ridiculous and was outraged by the "idiocy of these goats." Finally, in one of the more ironic twists in the history of sexual magic, Parsons himself literally went up in flames, killed in an accidental chemical explosion in 1952. Nonetheless, many of Parsons's admirers have suggested that his Babalon Working may have had some real-world effects, that it had served to "crack open the Apocalyptic gateway and activate the cult forces necessary for the upheaval of consciousness," as we see in the increasing chaos of war, disease, famine, and terrorism in the late twentieth century.[98]

On a somewhat less apocalyptic note, however, at least one of Parsons's many projects would later come to fruition. He had in fact planned to devise a new kind of pagan religion called "The Witchcraft"—an idea that was soon to come to pass with the rebirth of neo-pagan witchcraft in the mid-1950s.[99]

CONCLUSION: THE BEAST WITH TWO BACKS—THE LAST VICTORIAN OR THE FIRST POST-MODERN?

> The magician creates a commotion by disturbing the balance of power.
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *Magick in Theory and Practice*

> Actually, you already know Aleister Crowley, for he is part of you. You are as multiselved, polysexual, and chaotic as he was for eight hours out of every twenty-four—one third of your whole life. Unfortunately, you have probably not learned to take that side of your Self seriously, as Crowley did.
> ROBERT ANTON WILSON

The bizarre and tragic case of Jack Parsons is telling evidence that Aleister Crowley left a profound impact on virtually all of the occult traditions that followed in the twentieth century. Perhaps even more than his writings or ritual performances, Crowley's influence lay in his persona—his image as the wickedest man in the world, as the Beast 666, as an icon of radical transgression and the violation of all social and sexual taboos. As Ronald Hutton aptly observes, "Crowley's greatest . . . bequest to later paganism and magic(k) was to be his reputation."[100]

Yet Crowley was also a deeply ambivalent and contradictory figure, a man who embodied many of the fundamental cultural contradictions of Western society in the early twentieth century. A kind of "Beast with Two Backs," he was a striking exemplar of the very same late Victorian society that he fought so hard to violate and transgress.[101] His own relentless quest for transgression and his preoccupation with masturbation, sodomy, and self-defilement only show that he was never really able to transcend the taboos of his Victorian childhood. As Nikolas Schreck and Zeena Schreck observe, even Crowley, "who spent decades energetically reacting to the sexual repression of his upbringing in an extreme Christian sect, never completely deprogrammed himself. Even in his sixties, one gets the impression he was still 'being a bad boy,' doing everything he could to outrage his long-dead parents."[102] By the end of his life in the 1940s, moreover, Crowley also seemed to have reached much the same state of exhaustion and collapse experienced by Britain and most of Europe at the end of World War II: like the grand ideals of European modernism, his dreams of a glorious new age of Thelema had ended not in a utopian society but in drug addiction, loneliness, and squalor.

In this sense, Crowley might be said to be both the "last great Victorian" and a remarkable prefiguration of our own generation at the turn of the new millennium. With his radical attempt to tear down an old, obsolete, repressive society; with his relentless search for experiences that shatter the boundaries of the human self; and with his insatiable thirst for the transgression of every social taboo, Crowley also foreshadowed much of what would follow in late-twentieth-century Western society. As we will see in chapter 8, Crowley was in many ways a striking precursor of many of the intellectual trends of the late twentieth century, such as postmodernism and deconstruction, as well as a forefather of contemporary movements such as Chaos Magic.

But perhaps more than anything else, Crowley foreshadowed the profound obsession with sexuality and transgression in our own generation at the turn of the millennium. As Foucault argues, it may not be the case that we in the modern West have liberated sex in any radical way, but what we *have* done is to intensify our discourse about sex, arguing and fantasizing about it as an endless source of titillation. At the same time, we have also taken sex to the furthest possible extremes—to extremes of transgression and excess, not resting until we have violated every taboo: "The twentieth century will undoubtedly have discovered the related categories of exhaustion, excess, the limit and transgression—the strange and unyielding form of these irrevocable movements which consume and consummate us."[103] More than one author has observed that Crowley in many ways anticipated the sexual revolutions of the late twentieth century and our own age of mass consumption at the turn of the millennium. As Leslie Shepherd notes, "it is just as well that Crowley was ahead of his time"; had he been unleashed today, amid our obsessions with sex and transgression in contemporary consumer society, "he might have taken the world by storm."[104] Actually, I think there's still a good chance that he might.

5 The Yoga of Power

Sex Magic, Tantra, and Fascism in Twentieth-Century Europe

Sex is the "greatest magical force in nature"; an impulse acts in it which suggests the mystery of the One, even when almost everything in the relationship between man and woman deteriorates into animal embraces and is exhausted . . . in a faded idealizing sentimentality. . . . The metaphysics of sex survives in the very cases where, in looking at wretched mankind and the vulgarity of infinite lives of infinite races—endless masks . . . of the Absolute Man seeking the Absolute Woman . . . —it is hard to overcome a feeling of disgust and revolt.
JULIUS EVOLA, *Metafisica del sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*)

The superior and even transcendent dimensions of sex, known by the world of Tradition in multiple forms, have been lost. . . .

The world of Tradition effectively knows a sexual sacrum and a magic of sex. What constantly transpires in countless symbols and customs from all parts of the world is the acknowledgment of sex as a creative and primordial force, rather than as a generative power.
JULIUS EVOLA, *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (*Revolt against the Modern World*)

It might seem at first surprising that the modern literature on sexual magic—so much of which centers around a powerful ideal of social and political *liberation* —should also be connected to a movement typically associated in most contemporary American minds with political oppression and lack of freedom—namely, fascism. In fact, one of the most influential twentieth-century authors on Tantra and the spiritual aspects of sexuality was Baron Julius Evola, who would also emerge as one of the most influential figures in European fascism from the 1920s to the present. Evola himself was never officially a member of the Fascist Party—he was in fact quite critical of Mussolini in certain respects—and many recent scholars have bent over backward to try to distance him from fascism altogether, arguing that he was instead primarily an extreme "Traditionalist," in the spiritual sense of the term.[1] However, Evola was clearly a powerful force in the intellectual development of fascism and is still widely read by neo-fascist groups

Figure 13. Julius Evola.

in Europe today. Indeed, he has been described variously as "Italy's leading racial philosopher and the chief ideologue of the country's terrorist radical right"[2] and "the most important thinker of the right radical Neo-Fascist revisionists."[3]

In addition to his political work, however, Evola was extremely interested in Tantra and the spiritual aspects of sexuality, writing several major works on the subject such as *Yoga della potenza* (*The Yoga of Power*) and *Metafisica del sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*). Indeed, he saw in the radical, transgressive practices of Tantra the most extreme, even violent techniques most needed in this most extreme and violent period in modern history. Even now, his works on the topic are regularly republished and widely read in esoteric, occultist, and neo-pagan circles throughout Europe and the United States.

This chapter will look closely at Baron Evola's early life and writings in the context of fascism and other movements in early-twentieth-century Europe. As I hope to show, Evola found (or at least thought he had found) in Tantra and magic the most powerful solution to the ills of modern Western civilization, which he saw as corrupt, degenerate, and nearing its own self-destruction. As Marshall Berman observes, many intellectuals of the early twentieth century were experiencing an acute sense of loss, displacement, and dislocation amid the radical transformations of modern Europe. With the rapid new technological innovations, the breakdown of old agrarian culture in the face of urbanization, and the waning power of religious authority in the face of modern science, it seemed to many that "all that is solid was melting into air"; "This atmosphere . . . of agitation and turbulence, psychic dizziness and drunkenness, expansion of experiential possibilities and destruction of moral boundaries and personal bonds, self-enlargement and self-derangement is the atmosphere in which modern sensibility is born."[4] Like Benito Mussolini and many Italian intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s, Evola was particularly concerned with the issues of national strength and "virility." For Evola, modern Italy—indeed, all of modern Western culture—was in a state of degeneration, owing in large part to the misunderstanding and abuse of sexuality. In the Eastern traditions of Tantra, Evola believed he had discovered one of the most powerful ways to recover the "virile," "heroic," and "masculine" values that had been lost in the "effete," "emasculated" modern West.

Like Aleister Crowley, P. B. Randolph, and Theodor Reuss, Evola closely linked Tantra and a spiritual vision of sexuality to an ideal of *liberation and freedom;* it was the most powerful means to wage his "revolt against the modern world." The difference is that, for Evola, this meant a radical liberation from the old, decaying world of modern Christian Europe and a "counterrevolutionary" return to the hierarchical, imperial society of pre-Christian Rome. In so doing, however, he introduced a powerful new interpretation—and some might argue severe misinterpretation—of Tantra and sexual magic, by transforming it into a path of power, martial strength, and war. For Evola, this radical liberation must of necessity come by means of violence, and at least in his early years, he saw fascism as perhaps the most expedient means to achieve this violent liberation and return to "heroic," "masculine," and "virile" ideals.

REVOLT AGAINST THE MODERN WORLD: FASCISM AND "TRADITION" IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPE

> [I]f we look around us today and note the demise of the only two states—Russia and Germany—that had preserved remnants of hierarchical values . . . we must draw the conclusion that fascism is still the West's best hope.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Imperialismo pagano* (*Pagan Imperialism*)

> [A] universal and feverish interest in sex and woman is the mark of every twilight period . . . this phenomenon today is among the many signs that this epoch is the terminal phase of a regressive process.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Metafisica del sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*)

Born in 1898, the son of a noble Sicilian family, Baron Giulio Alessandre Evola (later to take the name Julius or Julius Cesare) was raised in a strong

Catholic family. Always a rebellious spirit, Evola in his youth joined the ultraprogressive circle of the Futurist poets Filippo Marinetti and Giovanni Papini, who in turn introduced him to Eastern spirituality and Christian mysticism. In keeping with Marinetti's famous exclamation that war is "the world's only hygiene,"[5] Evola enlisted in the army at age nineteen and served in World War I as a mountain artillery officer. After the war, Evola appears to have embarked on a personal quest for "ultimate transcendence . . . beyond the ethical and spiritual limitations of bourgeois prejudices," which led him to experiment with hallucinogenic drugs and the radical avant-garde painting styles of Dadaism.[6] Among Evola's many early influences was the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, and particularly Nietzsche's searing critiques of Christian morality and bourgeois conformity and his quest for superhuman values. Ultimately, Evola would formulate his own imperative of *tu diventare Dio* ("you must become God"). For in a world in which "God is dead"—at least the old god of Christian Europe—the genuine superman must take his rightful place as a divine being with divine creative power. In Evola's words, "*No more* thirsting of the soul for a hallucinated God to pray to and adore. . . . To soar beyond and above with *pure forces.*"[7]

Like many European intellectuals in the years between the two world wars, Evola felt that the modern Western world was in a state of intense crisis. As Berman observes, many authors and philosophers, from Charles Baudelaire to Nietzche to Emile Durkheim, shared a sense that the modern West had undergone such intense and rapid transformation as to lose all stable grounding and become a kind of "maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal."[8] Evola, however, was among the most intense and relentless critics of this modern condition. As Thomas Sheehan observes, "In no other contemporary European thinker . . . is the rejection of history—and, *a fortiori,* the modern world—so absolute and so violent."[9] Following other Traditionalist authors like René Guénon, Evola saw modern Western civilization in a state of severe decline, falling away from its authentic spiritual values and degenerating into empty materialism. For Evola, modernity is nothing short of a "metaphysical evil."[10] In contrast to the Traditional values of hierarchy, aristocracy, and sacral monarchy, the modern world had been corrupted by the illusory ideals of democracy, materialism, and capitalism:

> Present Western "civilization" awaits a substantial upheaval without which it is destined, sooner or later, to smash its own head.
>
> It has carried out the most complete *perversion* of the rational order of things.

> The West has lost its ability to command and to obey. . . .
>
> It has lost its feeling for values, spiritual power, godlike men. . . .
>
> It no longer knows the state, the state as value, crystallized in the empire. Synthesis of this sort of spirituality and majesty that shone brightly in China, Egypt, Persia, and Rome . . . has been overwhelmed by the bourgeois misery of a monopoly of slaves and traders.[11]

Even more so than Guénon, however, Evola blamed the Christian church and its weak, passive, effete values for the onset of this decline, and he saw the greatest hope for Europe's salvation in a return to the strong, powerful, "virile" traditions of pre-Christian pagan Europe. True "liberation" for Evola, therefore, meant liberation from the weak, slavish morality of Christian Europe and a return to the strong, hierarchical, and aristocratic ideals of the pagan past:

> To Christianity's race of slaves and children of God, will be opposed a race of liberated and liberating beings who interpret God as a supreme power that one may freely obey or do battle against in manly fashion with one's head held high, immune to the taint of feelings, vacillations and prayers. To feelings of dependence and lack will be opposed a feeling of sufficiency; to the will to equality, the will of . . . hierarchy and aristocracy.
>
> The world is to be cleaned, returned to its *pre-Christian state.* It is to be returned to a free, overabundant essential state. . . .
>
> This is our truth and this is the threshold of our *great liberation:* the end of *faith* and the world's emancipation from God.[12]

To achieve this true liberation, a liberation from Christianity and the past, Evola envisaged the birth of a spiritual aristocracy who might restore the virility of a decaying modern Europe.

Fascism with a Soul: Evola's Spiritual Fascism

> [F]ascism has developed a body. But this body is still lacking a soul. It is still lacking the superior power needed to justify it, complete it, make it rise to its feet as a principle opposed to all of Europe.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Imperialismo pagano* (*Pagan Imperialism*)

> This political process is flanked by a philosophical process; if it be true that matter was on the altars for a century, today it is the spirit which takes its place . . . by saying that God is returning, we mean that spiritual values are returning.
>
> BENITO MUSSOLINI (in Thomas Sheehan, "Myth and Violence")

Given his strongly anti-Christian and antidemocratic ideals, it is not surprising that Evola was closely associated with the rising power of Italian fascism. It is true that Evola never did officially join the Fascist Party and was indeed sharply critical of it throughout his work; however, he was clearly interested in it as a possible vehicle for his own religious and social ideals and was an active supporter during the 1920s. Throughout his work, Evola also shared many cultural and racial views with fascism, including a generally quite clearly "hostile attitude toward Jews,"[13] and a firm belief in racial and socioeconomic hierarchy. One of the most controversial examples of Evola's complex relation to fascism was his *Imperialismo pagano* (*Pagan Imperialism: Fascism before the Euro-Christian Peril*, 1928), in which he presents fascism as the best hope of restoring Europe to its traditional, hierarchical structure and sacred power. Although he was quite critical of what he saw as the bourgeois and materialistic aspects of the party, he also believed that fascism was perhaps "the last chance for the West" and also hoped that he could "rechannel Fascism with this battle cry" in order to resurrect Rome's ancient greatness and re-form a "true sacral monarchy."

> With regard to fascism, we declare:
>
> Fascism . . . will blaze the path toward breaking up the monstrous political connivance with the Catholic Church. . . .
>
> Once fascism transcends the bourgeois-industrial definition of empire, once it embraces imperiousness in the true, traditional sense . . . [F]ascism will find its soul within itself.[14]

Thus, Evola was an influential figure in the formation of an esoteric group called the Scuola Mistica del Fascismo, founded in 1930 under the auspices of Arnaldo Mussolini, which Evola saw as a possible vehicle for the kind of initiatory brotherhood needed to organize his spiritual aristocracy: "In this school Evola saw the realization of one of his favorite plans. . . . Its purpose was to form a core with a strongly spiritual worldview . . . an Order that would take on the spiritual leadership of Fascism. It was a matter of the much desired 'new Fascist type of man,' who would correspond to the knightly and ascetic goal of sacrifice for a higher ideal."[15]

Evola may have been introduced to Mussolini as early as the 1920s; however, their first formal meeting took place in 1942, after Il Duce had read and highly praised Evola's *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (*Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*). Evola had developed a new "spiritual" model of racism, clearly distinguished from the National Socialists' biological racism, which neatly fulfilled Mussolini's own aim of finding "a racial doctrine of his own, different from Germany's."[16] However, Evola also clearly felt that Mussolini's fascism needed to be infused with a spiritual element, its powerful body given a "soul," in order to make it a true vehicle for his pagan imperial ideal: "He wanted to create a spiritual foundation in the prevailing climate of the New Order, fascism, and to strengthen what in his eyes were the positive possibilities in bringing back the idea of the ancient Roman empire."[17] If this spiritualization of fascism could be achieved, Evola believed, Europe might recover the traditional and "superhuman" values (in Nietszche's sense) of its past imperial grandeur:

> These values . . . are of cosmic significance, reflecting the power of the Aeion, the *Ur*, the terrible fire of magical initiations. . . . They encompass the sounding of an alarm, an appeal for disgust, the call for an awakening, and a summons to participate in the great struggle in which the destiny of the West will be decided. . . . Fascism must begin here: by beginning the slow, tenacious construction of a new and wondrous race.[18]

For the most part, Evola was always an outsider to fascist politics and was often regarded with suspicion by the party. Thus, his early periodical, *La Torre*, had to be taken off the shelf by order of Mussolini because of Evola's outspoken criticisms of the party, and as a result, "in spite of his sympathies for Fascism, he was obliged to move about Rome with bodyguards."[19] Shortly before war in 1939, Evola submitted an application to become a member of the Fascist Party, apparently so that he could enlist in the war. However, his application was denied, in large part because of his many journalistic critiques of the party.[20] Above all, Evola believed fascism lacked the spiritual foundations necessary to achieve the kind of pagan imperialist ideal that he envisaged. As he put it in his essay "Lo Stato, Potenza e Liberta" in 1925, fascism "in no way possesses a cultural and spiritual root" but is instead a "grotesque parody if one looks at the type of ruler and the state that ought to embody the principle of freedom."[21] After the Allies took Rome in 1943, Evola's relations with Mussolini ended; however, it is said that Il Duce continued to have a certain supernatural respect for Evola, even at a distance: "it is reported that Mussolini stood in considerable awe of Evola's 'magical powers'"[22] and according to rumor made the gesture against the Evil Eye whenever Evola's name was mentioned.

Disillusioned with the weaknesses of fascism, Evola would turn instead to German Nazism: "exactly because he did not see his ideals fulfilled in Fascism, he turned to National Socialism, which in his opinion seemed of much more consequence, as it continued to speak . . . of its own spiritual roots. Of holy runes, and so on."[23] It seems that National Socialism had a certain aesthetic appeal for Evola, who was drawn to the "orchestrated and almost choreographed military deployments, Speer's Cathedral of Light displays and so on, which in the case of the SS—with their uniforms and long black coats, as well as their death's head insignia—were endowed with a character that was especially cold, impersonal and reminiscent of glacial regions. The fact that Evola responded to aesthetic stimuli is evident . . . from his own personal style, with his monocle and impeccable suits."[24] As he commented in 1938, the SS seemed to embody many of the ideals of an esoteric spiritual Order that he envisaged as the means to revive Traditional culture: "we can see the nucleus of an Order in the higher sense of tradition in the 'Black Corps.'"[25]

Some critics have speculated that Evola may have even served as an agent for the German Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, SD), which had set itself up within the SS "to carry out cultural activities and cultural supervision."[26] During the early 1940s, Evola also traveled in Vienna using a forged passport, when his own passport was withdrawn by the Italian foreign ministry because of his increasing criticisms of fascism and his call for a united "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." According to some recent scholars, Evola may have been acting as more than an ordinary traveling lecturer in Germany, but was possibly engaged in a delicate mission on behalf of Mussolini to build a bridge of understanding between Italy and Germany.[27] During this period, Evola was also commissioned by certain circles within the SS to write the *Storia segreta delle societa segrete*, or "Secret History of Secret Societies," and was given access to SS archives containing numerous documents confiscated from various esoteric organizations. The SS, however, seems to have been quite suspicious of Evola, whom they regarded as a "reactionary Roman" and an old fashioned feudal aristocratic, not exactly in line with the new ideal of National Socialism.[28]

While in Vienna, Evola was hit by a shell and left permanently crippled. Even after the war, however, he continued to be suspected for his extreme political connections and was arrested in 1951 on charges of attempting to revive fascism. In his later work, Evola used the term "Tradition" as a spiritual ideal transcending the narrow aims of fascism, even though the latter may have embodied some of the principles of Traditional life.[29] Yet to this day, Evola is regarded as one of the most influential figures in the many neofascist movements throughout Europe, dubbed the "spiritual master of the new Right" and the leading thinker of groups like the terrorist *Nuova Destra*. "Down to the time of his death in 1974, Evola stood as the leading intellectual of neofascism and/or the radical right in all of Europe."[30]

THE METAPHYSICS OF SEX: THE SEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL VIRILITY

> Everyone knows the part played by sex in our present civilization, and indeed there is a kind of obsession with it. In no other era have woman and sex taken the front of the stage in such a manner. They are dominant in a thousand forms in literature, theater, cinema, advertising and the whole of contemporary practical life. Woman is presented in a thousand forms to attract man and stupefy him sexually. . . . [S]triptease epitomizes the most recent decades of Western civilization under the sign of sex.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Metafisica del Sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*)

Much of Evola's critique of modern Western culture and much of his hope for its renewal centered around the issues of sexuality, reproduction, and gender. Like Crowley, Randolph, and others before him—including Freud and Wilhelm Reich—Evola regards sex as one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful drive in human nature. (During the 1920s, in fact, Evola was first introduced to the work of Freud and was apparently so excited that he said, "The World of Freud must become the true world of thought."[31]) Much like Crowley and Randolph, Evola identifies sex as the fundamental spiritual drive toward reunification and reintegration of complementary forces. Therefore, as Freud had shown, this drive cannot be repressed without severe psychological and emotional consequences:

> Sexual drive lies at the very root of the living individual, and to believe one can truly suppress it is self-delusion. At best it can be repressed in its most direct manifestations, but this will only lead to the neurotic and divided existence on which modern psychoanalysis has cast so much light.[32]

Evola in particular blames the life-denying attitudes of Christianity for this neurotic repression of sexuality, which created a weak and emasculated civilization: "the Christian religious rule has only bequeathed us social restraint and the . . . dull fettering of the human animal."[33]

Virility and Empire: Sexual Politics in Fascist Italy

> Fertile peoples have a right to Empire, those with the pride and the will to propagate their race on the face of the earth, the virile peoples, in the most literal sense of the word.
>
> BENITO MUSSOLINI, "Al popolo di Lucania"

> If all efforts to reawaken the spiritual dimension of sexuality fail, and if the form of virility is not separated from what has become an amorphous and promiscuous spiritual substance, then everything is in vain.
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (*Revolt against the Modern World*)

Evola was by no means alone among Italian intellectuals of the early twentieth century in his concern with sexuality, virility, and the proper relations between men and women. As David Horn has argued, sexuality and reproduction were central topics of debate among many Italian scholars, scientists, and politicians in the years after World War I. There was, on the one hand, a strong desire to extend Italian national power and colonial expansion and, on the other hand, a growing concern about the apparent decline in fertility and population. This anxiety had already been apparent in Italy (and in other European countries) since the early decades of the twentieth century, with concerns about marriage at late age and increasing numbers of individuals who never married, but it became a particularly central concern after fascism displaced democracy as a political regime in 1922. As Benito Mussolini argued in the quote cited above, a strong nation, indeed an "Empire," belongs to the *virile* peoples who have the power to spread their race over the face of the earth.[34] But Mussolini, like many others of the 1920s and 1930s, was also deeply worried about such problems as late marriage and infertility: "aging nations, imagined as bodies whose virility was no longer assured, were threatened by 'younger' and more prolific peoples."[35] As Mussolini warned in 1927, "we are few," and the Italian body politic was in need of strength, numbers, and virility: "A first, if not fundamental premise of the political, economic and moral strength of nations is their demographic strength."[36]

In response to this apparent problem, and in order to defend the Italian stock, a new series of social, political, and scientific technologies were created to manage and optimize the health of the Italian social body. These included legal measures to discourage bachelorhood, abortion or contraception, and financial incentives to encourage marriage, childbirth, and large families. And this in turn gave birth to new scientific and medical discourses dedicated to the health and virility of the nation: "[F]ascism's concern to stimulate the growth and colonial expansion of the Italian population gave prominence to the statistical models of national decline. . . . [F]ascism took up the language of the medical and social sciences in a self-conscious effort to constitute itself as a modern form of government."[37] Evola's own unique attitudes toward sex, religion, and politics cannot, I think, be understood outside this larger matrix of reproductive discourse in Italy.

Manliness as a Metaphysical Essence

> With regard also to sex, the rediscovery of its highest primary and deepest meaning . . . depends on the possibility of the reintegration of modern man and on his arising once more and betaking himself beyond the psychic and spiritual lowlands in to which he has been led by the mirages of his material civilization, for in this low land the meaning of being truly a man or woman is doomed to vanish.
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Metafisica del sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*)

Like Mussolini and many other Italian intellectuals of his day, Evola also saw the abuse and misunderstanding of the sexual drive as one of the root causes for the "crisis of the modern world" and the decline of Western civilization. One of the features of this degenerate modern era—or "Kali Yuga," the age of darkness and conflict, as he called it, using terms drawn from Hindu mythology—is the rampant pursuit of sexual pleasure as an end in itself, without an understanding of its higher, spiritual meaning. And this in turn has led to the decline of true aristocratic stock and the "superior races," as more and more mediocre lower classes reproduce and fewer and fewer of the aristocracy do so:

> Today . . . men instead of being in control of sex are controlled by it and wander about like drunkards . . . without seeing the guiding principle acting behind their quest for pleasure. . . . [I]t is no wonder that superior races are dying out before the ineluctable logic of individualism, which especially in the so-called contemporary "higher classes" has caused people to lose all desire to procreate.[38]

This weakening of the racial stock has only been made all the worse with the modern rise of feminism and new roles for women in the social structure. In Evola's opinion, women's power has always gone hand in hand with cultural decline, and the fact that women are assuming more power in modern Western cultures is only another sign of our general loss of true "virility":

> The periods in which women have reached autonomy and preeminence almost always have coincided with epochs marked by manifest decadence in ancient civilizations. Thus the best and most authentic reaction against feminism . . . should not be aimed at women as such, but at men instead. It should not be expected of women that they return to what they really are and thus reestablish the . . . conditions for a reintegration of a superior race, when men themselves retain only the semblance of true virility.[39]

In place of this rampant sensuality, hedonism, and feminism that plagues the modern West, Evola calls for a return to the true ideals of sacred sexuality and *spiritual virility.*[40] Indeed, the theme of virility and "manliness"—

as opposed to mere "masculinity," that is, manliness as a *metaphysical essence*[41]—is one of the most recurring themes in Evola's work.

In contrast to Mussolini, however, Evola sees the real problem facing Italy as not so much one of *under*population but rather of *over*population that is, overpopulation by the dull, common masses. The teeming, oversexed, and endlessly reproducing masses are, in Evola's eyes, comparable to maggots swarming over a decomposing corpse or cancer cells destroying a body:

> The modern world is far from being threatened by the danger of underpopulation . . . we are facing the opposite danger; the constant and untrammeled increase of population in purely quantitative terms. . . . [T]he superior Western races have been agonizing for many centuries and . . . the increasing growth in world population has the same meaning as the swarming of worms on a decomposing organism or as the spreading of cancerous cells: . . . This is the scenario facing the modern world: the regression and the decline of fecundating . . . forces and forces that bear forms parallel to the unlimited proliferation of "matter" of what is formless, that of the masses.[42]

Thus, in order to recover true spiritual virility and manliness, Evola would turn not to a fascist-style emphasis on reproduction, but to the Western traditions of sexual magic and to the Eastern traditions of Tantra.

DESTRUCTION, DESIRE, AND SEX: TANTRA, MAGIC, AND THE LEFT-HAND PATH

> These values . . . are of cosmic significance, reflecting the power of the Aeion, the Ur, the terrible fire of magical initiations.
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Imperialismo pagano* (*Pagan Imperialism*)

> A fundamental characteristic of the last or so-called Dark Age (Kali Yuga) is the awakening and ultimate dominance of Kali, who stamps the epoch with her sign. . . . [S]he is the goddess not only of destruction but also of desire and sex. . . . [T]he Tantric doctrine formulates an ethic . . . that in preceding epochs would have been censured and kept secret: the transmutation of poison into medicine.
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Metafisica del Sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*)

In addition to his political work and his lasting impact on fascist and neofascist movements throughout Europe, Evola is also one of the twentieth century's most influential scholars of magic, esotericism, Hermeticism, and the Eastern traditions of Tantra. Indeed, Evola's first major publications on esoteric topics occurred more or less concurrently with his first major publications on political themes, during the late 1920s. And his writings on magic and Tantra were clearly linked in complex and interesting ways with his hope for a sociopolitical transformation and "counterrevolution" in modern Europe.

UR and Krur: *Magic and Traditional Action*

> [T]he figure of the magus retains in a highly visible way the ideal of spiritual virility, which is most essential for the higher type of the initiate or the adept. The magus has always called to mind the ideal of a dominating superiority.
>
> EA (EVOLA), "Considerations on Magic and Its Powers," in *Introduction to Magic*

Not only did Evola write numerous texts on the subjects of alchemy, Tantra, and magic, but he was also actively engaged in esoteric practices aimed at having "magical" effects on the world. In the late 1920s Evola and other Italian authors such as Arturo Reghini and Guilio Parese formed an esoteric group known as "UR" (the name is derived from "the phonetic value u-r, present in both Chaldaic and the Runic. In the first case it signifies 'fire' and in the second 'bull' . . . and also 'Aries'"; it is probably also a reference to the German prefix *ur*, meaning something primordial or ancient[43]). Between 1927 and 1929, the UR group published its own journal containing a variety of articles—written under pseudonyms—on magic, Hermeticism, and Tantra. "Their goal: to bring their individual selves into such a state of superhuman power and awareness that they would be able to act 'magically' on the world. Their methods: the practice of ancient Tantric and Buddhist rituals and the study of Hermetic texts."[44]

Among the key figures involved in the UR circle was the mysterious Russian-born occultist Maria de Naglowska, who became best known in the 1930s for her practice of sexual magic at her "seminary," "La Flèche d'Or." Indeed, Evola is widely believed to have had an affair with Naglowska, and it seems probable that he was involved in her sexual rites.[45]

Magic, for the UR group, meant essentially "the *ars regia* and the initiatic science of the Self," that is, the "regal" and "heroic" art of knowing one's true inner and divine self-nature. However, according to "Ea" (i.e., Evola), magic is distinguished from mysticism, spiritualism, and the like precisely because it is a practical and active method—"an experimental science and technique"—that wields *power* and exerts real effects on the external world: "The magical act emanates from a state of absolute *evidence-knowledge;* the meaning of a direct, real causality, or of the *power* that immediately produces an effect, is inseparable from it."[46] The idea of "power" is crucial here. As Evola defines it, power is a kind of "feminine" force, while the magus is the stern "male" who must attract and control this feminine power by his own hardness and coolness:

> [P]ower is feminine and seeks a center: he who knows how to give a center to this power through his own *renunciation* . . . and *harness* created by domination of his soul, by isolation and resistance—power is unfailingly attracted to such a person and obeys him as her own *male*. . . . *Being* is the condition of power; an impassability . . . that does not look at it, is what attracts it. Power eludes *desire* for power, like a woman shunning the lustful embrace of an impotent lover.[47]

Ultimately, the magus as the master of this "feminine" power is the embodiment of Evola's ideal of "*spiritual virility*" and the "*dominating superiority*" that raises him above the dull mass of ordinary mankind. "The subject invested with powers, or the magus, is a being who is substantially different from an ordinary person and has nothing in common with him; it is a real change of state that has endowed the magus with powers."[48]

Although it is never made explicit in the publications of the UR group, there are strong implications that Evola hoped the magical activities of this organization might have larger repercussions beyond their small circle of initiates.

> Evola himself wrote that the aim of the "chain" of the UR group, aside from "awakening a higher force that might serve to help the singular work of every individual," was also to act "on this type of psychic body that begged for creation, and by evocation to connect it with a genuine influence from above," so that "one may perhaps have the possibility of working behind the scenes in order to ultimately exert an effect on the prevailing forces in the general environment."[49]

Evola does not here make explicit what he means by "working behind the scenes" in order to exert an effect on the "general environment." But given the fact that he was during these same years publishing strong political statements in other journals and in his controversial *Pagan Imperialism*, it is not hard to imagine that this "effect" might have included the type of political "counterrevolution" that he called for in his nonmagical writings.

In fact, it was in large part due to Evola's controversial political works, which evoked fierce criticism from both the Fascist Party and the Catholic Church, that other members of UR attempted to evict Evola and the group was formally dissolved. In its place, however, Evola would begin a new publication entitled *Krur* (which "derives from the Sumerian root *k-r*, *k-u-r*, signifying 'residence' or 'house', 'mountain' and 'strength'"[50]). *Krur* was only published in eight issues before being discontinued—or more accurately "transformed"—and given a more explicitly social and political agenda. According to an editor's note of 1928, *Krur* was to be joined with a larger nationalist agenda in line with Evola's own philosophical and political writings: "*Krur* intends to link itself more explicitly to a vaster movement, which is affirmed on the one hand by the philosophical work of J. Evola . . . and on the other hand acts in diverse instances to integrate into the preceding impulse of national renewal the values of spiritual, Ghibelline, heroic anti-European imperialism."[51] As Evola explained in a note to the readers in 1930, *Krur* was the esoteric predecessor of his new periodical, *La Torre,* which was much more explicitly concerned with contemporary social and political issues. However, he makes it clear that the "magical" element has not been abandoned, but simply *redirected* toward problems of culture and the defense of the "body politic":

> *Krur* is transforming. Having fulfilled the tasks relative to the technical mastery of esotericism . . . we have accepted the invitation to transfer our action to a vaster, more visible, more immediate field: the very plane of Western "culture" and the problems that, in this moment of crisis, affect both individual and mass consciousness. . . . The heroic-magical point of view that we have always held will not be abandoned; in reality it alone will constitute the point of reference and justification. . . . It is our intention to erect an unbreachable bulwark against the general decline of every value in life . . . our proposal to stand firm on the ramparts, ready for both defense and offense, isolated and closed to any escape. For all these reasons, the title *Krur* will be changed to the title *La Torre* [The Tower].[52]

From this statement, it seems clear that Evola believed the "power" of magic to go far beyond the realm of occult ritual and private experience and, on the contrary, to have consequences on a collective and national scale as well.

The Yoga of Virility and Power: Evola's Interpretation of Tantra

> Tantrism anticipated a situation that corresponds to our modern times. Tantrism has foretold the phase of the last age (Kali Yuga), whose essential traits—those of an epoch of dissolution—can incontrovertibly be recognized in so many events and trends of our day and age. . . . According to the Tantras, the path to be followed is that which in other times was kept secret in view of the dangers associated with it. This path is reserved only for a small minority (for the viras . . .): it is implicitly precluded to the masses.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Yoga della potenza* (*The Yoga of Power*)

Like Reuss, Crowley, Pierre Bernard, and others before him, Evola would find the purest embodiment of his spiritual ideals not in the Western religious tradition—which for him had been co-opted and corrupted by the weak morality of Christianity—but rather in the more radical Eastern traditions of left-hand Tantra. Evola had long admired much about Hindu religion and culture. In Evola's eyes, the Hindu social system of class (*varna*) and caste was the ideal embodiment of a genuine "Traditional" social, political, and economic order.[53] But he was even more attracted to the highly esoteric and transgressive rituals of left-hand Tantra. Indeed, in his essay "What Tantrism Means to Modern Western Civilization," Evola even predicted that "Tantrism may lead the way for a Western elite which does not want to become the victim of these experiences whereby an entire civilization is on the verge of being submerged."[54] And, like most others before him, Evola also inherited the rather skewed and distorted version of Tantra portrayed by European Orientalist scholars, who identified it with sexual experience and radical transgression. Evola does seem to have known a bit more about Tantric philosophy and practice than did Reuss or Crowley, primarily through his association with Sir John Woodroffe/Arthur Avalon, who sent him copies of his translations of Tantric texts in the 1920s. But Evola would also add some new interpretations of his own, portraying Tantra as the most powerful and even violent path needed for our own violent modern world.

Already during the early period of the UR group, Evola seems to have found in Tantra an ideal fulfillment of his spiritual ideals. Thus the UR journal published an Italian translation of Avalon/Woodroffe's English translations of the *Kularnava Tantra,* one of the most important texts of the Kaula school. According to the footnotes to the text (which were probably written by Evola), Tantra contains in essence many of the same basic doctrines of Magic in the UR sense of the term. The ideal of the Tantric *vira,* or "hero"—which is etymologically related to the Latin root *vir*—is essentially the same as that of the Magus in the Western esoteric tradition. Both refer to the truly "spiritually virile" man, who rises above the herd of the common masses or "beasts": "*Vira* means 'virile man' in an eminent sense, or heroic type. . . . [I]n Tantrism we can see a reconfirmation of that virile and affirming attitude that has been rendered . . . with the general term of 'Magic.'"[55]

Evola's interest in Tantra would become even stronger in the years after World War II, particularly in his major works *Metafisica del sesso* and *Yoga della potenza* and in various shorter essays. In Tantra, he believed he had found a perfect antidote to many of the modern West's spiritual, cultural, and political ills—including its repressive and neurotic attitudes toward sexuality, in Freud's sense of the terms. In Evola's eyes, Tantra embodies a view of sexuality "that can be set against those elements that in contemporary civilization have an endemic, obsessive and primitive character"; the Tantric view of sex is fundamentally opposed to the "turbid, repressed sexuality that is considered by Freudian psychoanalysis."[56] Tantra is for Evola the exact opposite of the effete, passive morality of bourgeois Christianity; instead of flaccid asceticism and otherworldly withdrawal, Tantra emphasizes virile power and this-worldly pleasure: "In Tantrism . . . ascetic techniques are no longer employed to achieve an other-worldly liberation but to achieve liberty within the world . . . The password of Tantrism is . . . the unity of spiritual discipline and enjoyment of the world."[57]

In Tantra, Evola believed he had found the perfect definition of "power" (*shakti* in Sanskrit, *potenza* in Italian) in its Traditional sense: the same "spiritual virility" and divine force he had sought through magic. This is not "power" in the mundane modern sense of political domination or exertion of military force, which is a mere "diabolical mirage":[58]

> [T]his concept, which Evola derived from esotericism, especially from Tantra and Taoism, must be strictly differentiated from "force." . . . Power must function as its own "unmoved mover." To Evola, it is a meta-concept intended to overcome both rationalism and irrationalism, since on the one hand it makes use of reason, while on the other an elevation occurs through power to freedom, realization and primordial being.[59]

And it is precisely this virile, powerful, world-affirming attitude that Evola believed to be most needed in the current crisis of the degenerate, demoralized modern world. What Europe now needs is a potency and virility like that of the Hindu god Shiva himself—the Lord of the Lingam (phallus) and the supreme masculine principle in Hindu Tantric traditions:

> We must reawaken to a renewed, spiritualized *feeling* for the world . . . a feeling for the world as *power,* as the agile and free rhythmic dance of Shiva, as a sacrificial act (Veda). This feeling will breed strong, hard, active, solar, *Mediterranean* beings; beings made up of force and eventually *only* of force.[60]

But Shiva is the Lord, not only of Yoga and the phallus, but also of destruction and the all-consuming fire of time that consumes the universe at the end of the cosmic age.

Creative Destruction, Amorality, and the Necessity of Violence

> At the beginning of orgasm, a change of state takes place . . . and in an extreme case, during the spasm, the individual undergoes a traumatic experience of the power that "kills."
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Metafisica del sesso* (*The Metaphysics of Sex*)

> The main characteristics of Tantric deities must be considered as symbols of destroying forces, nude and free, superior to all laws.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, "What Tantrism Means to Modern Western Civilization"

Not only is Tantra, in Evola's view, the clearest embodiment of his ideals of "spiritual virility," life-affirmation, and power; it is also the path most suited to the violent, chaotic state of the modern world, after the death of God amid increasing war and destruction. For Evola, Tantra embodies his own ideal for life amid the modern world—namely, "riding the tiger," living amid the decadent modern world and using its violent, sexual forces against itself: "the way to be followed in the dark age is summed up in the saying 'riding the tiger'"; for this is the only viable "existential attitude proper to a differentiated human type who lives in an era of dissolution and in a world in which 'God is dead.'"[61]

Tantra, as Evola sees it, is essentially a path "beyond good and evil," an amoral or supramoral path that goes beyond even the superhuman "transvaluation of all values" called for by Nietzsche. The Tantric *vira*, or perfected individual (*siddha*), is a being who has transcended the narrow moral boundaries that confine ordinary "bestial" men (*pashus*); indeed, the siddha "can do whatever he wants," including acts that might seem immoral or impure by conventional standards.[62] His is the path of absolute liberation from all merely human values:

> [T]he ethics of the Path of the Left Hand and the disciplines [lead] to the destruction of human limitations (pasha), forms of anomia, or of something "beyond good and evil," which are so extreme that they make the Western supporters of the theory of the superman look like innocuous amateurs. . . . We are far beyond the "blond beast" and the individualist anarchists. . . . We are dealing here with a liberty that . . . has almost no equivalent in the universal history of ideas.[63]

Indeed, the Tantric *vira* seems to embody the very ideal of a new race of truly "heroic" men for the future that Evola imagined in his early work *Pagan Imperialism*—men who are at once generous and cruel, who recognize the necessity of hierarchy and caste, who know how to rule:

> A state of absolute justice, interrupted by conflagrations in which acts of absolute generosity and absolute cruelty insure that some men and races ascend, while others fall with a thud. . . . Precise relations, order, cosmos, hierarchy. Solar and sufficient beings, masters who are far-sighted . . . who resolutely incline toward ever more dizzying intensities within a hierarchical chain of being.[64]

As a path beyond good and evil, a path of "virile" heroes, Tantra is also, for Evola, the path that recognizes the necessity of violence. The worship of Tantric deities like Shiva, the destroyer, and Kali, the frightening black goddess of time and death, is for Evola comparable to the worship of Dionysius or Zagreus, the ecstatic deities associated with orgiastic violence, antinomian behavior, and radical transgression:

> Both the western pre-Orphic worship of Dionysus . . . and the Eastern worship of Shiva, Kali, Durga and other fearful divinities are characterized by the acknowledgment and glorification of destruction, violation and incitement: they admit expression of a liberating frenzy, very often strictly linked to orgiastic experience in a ritual, sacrificial and transfiguring framework.[65]

Ultimately, for Evola, Tantra is the path that not only embraces transgression, amorality, and violence but even affirms the necessity of real physical violence and bloodshed in the form of war. Thus, he cites the famous Hindu classic the *Bhagavad Gita,* or "Song of God," sung by Lord Krishna to the warrior Arjuna before they enter into a battle of apocalyptic proportions. And Evola gives this text a decidedly "Tantric" interpretation, identifying Arjuna's "heroic" willingness to fight and kill even his own friends and kinsmen with the Tantric "hero's" willingness to violate all social and moral norms for the sake of absolute liberation:

> In the *Bhagavad Gita,* the background to the Left Hand is given in strictly metaphysical . . . terms. . . . [T]he Divinity in his supreme form . . . can only be the infinite, and the infinite can only represent the crisis, the destruction, the breaking of everything that has a finite conditioned mortal character. . . . The *Bhagavad Gita* adopts this view . . . to metaphysically sanction warlike heroism against humanitarianism and sentimentality. God himself exhorts the warrior Arjuna not to hesitate to fight and strike. . . . In his heroic onslaught, which takes no account of his own life or that of others, and which shows faithfulness of his own nature as a son of the warrior cast, Arjuna will reflect the awful and majestic power of the transcendent which breaks and overwhelms everything, thus foreshadowing absolute freedom.[66]

In sum, at least according to Evola's interpretation, Tantra would seem to be the ideal practical fulfillment of much of what Evola had imagined in his early political writings. To Evola, Tantra seems to embody his pagan imperialist ideal of a "discipline of a spirit that burns within but produces an exterior rigid and tempered like steel, forces magnificently infused with the immeasurability of the infinite as found in feats of war and on the battlefield."[67]

CONCLUSION: "WE ARE GODS"
IN SEARCH OF ABSOLUTE LIBERATION

> This "human" feeling for life that is so typical of the West merely betrays its very plebian and inferior aspect. . . . Antiquity elevated the individual to godhood, strove to free him from the passions in order to raise him to the transcendental state, that liberating air of the peaks. . . . [T]hey knew of nonhuman heroes and men of divine blood.
>
> The "human" is to be overcome absolutely, without remorse. But to achieve this it is necessary for the individual to attain the feeling of inner liberation.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Imperialismo pagano* (*Pagan Imperialism*)

> [A]lthough the Kali yuga is an age of great destructions, those who live during it and manage to remain standing may achieve fruits that were not easily achieved by men living in other ages.
>
> JULIUS EVOLA, *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (*Revolt against the Modern World*)

Whereas most of the modern writers on sexual magic were in search of a radical liberation from the bondage of the past in some kind of utopian future, Evola was quite the opposite. His goal was a radical liberation from the decadent, corrupt world of modernity and a return to an imagined ideal of the "Traditional" past. In his relentless search for this Traditional ideal, Evola first turned to fascism and National Socialism, then later to his own interpretation of Hindu Tantra. However, throughout his work, there is a consistent and recurring theme of *liberation*—liberation from bourgeois Christian values, liberation from the human condition, and liberation from the decadent, materialistic modern Western world.

For Evola, this radical liberation required a certain degree of "violence" and "destruction," the sort of heroic destruction needed in times of war, the sort of divine violence needed to annihilate the demonic forces of modernity. But for Evola (and indeed, for many fascist and Nazi intellectuals), this violence was also linked in strangely disturbing ways to his sexual ideals. Thus it is perhaps not inappropriate that I conclude this chapter with Evola's quotations from Marquis de Sade in his *Metafisca del sesso*. Here he cites de Sade's famous words in *Juliette*, where the Marquis links destructive violence with sexual and indeed spiritual pleasure: "Oh what a voluptuous act is the act of destruction. There is no ecstasy like that which one savors when giving way to this divine infamy." As Evola observes in his commentary on this passage, the joy of de Sade's transgression and violence is the same joy of the superman, the one who has passed beyond all human limitations; it is the joy of one who has realized the truth that "God is dead" and, therefore, that "you must become god": "The pleasure in a destructive act is intended to violate the very laws of cosmic nature and is linked to and foreshadows the theory of the superman. 'We are gods' exclaimed one of the characters in his romances."[68]

Would it then be accurate to describe Evola as a kind of "spiritualized de Sade" or a strange unholy wedding of fascism, sexual magic, and pagan imperialism?" I think not. It would seem that de Sade's transgressions through sexual excess and violence were primarily a matter of personal pleasure and the ecstatic experience of overstepping conventional moral boundaries. Evola's ideal of sexual magic and Tantra was something quite different (and, some might say, more disturbing). For Evola, these sorts of sexual and moral transgressions were a necessary means to achieve the "superhuman," "heroic" state beyond the mundane condition of the bestial common masses. Ultimately, these seemingly "violent" and "destructive" methods were the extreme measures needed to achieve a true counterrevolution against the entire modern Western world and a complete sociopolitical transformation. As Evola understood it, this violence was necessary in order to raze the ground and pave the way for a genuine return to Traditional values: "*When we appear to be destroying we are in fact rearranging and replacing what is on the wane with higher forms, forms more vibrant and glorious.*"[69]

Ironically, then, Evola's radical revolt against the modern world led him to what is arguably a rather "modernist" solution—namely, the same "agitation and turbulence, psychic dizziness and drunkenness, expansion of experiential possibilities and destruction of moral boundaries and personal bonds, self-enlargement and self-derangement" that characterize the "maelstrom" of modernity and perhaps also fueled much of the Second World War.[70] His ideal of "riding the Tiger" is itself much like Nietzsche's ideal of the *Übermensch,* the Dionysian man who affirms the terrible will to power as a "monster of energy, without beginning, without ends" that flows through the modern world: "the modern was nothing more than a vital energy, the will to live and to power, swimming in a sea of disorder, anarchy, destruction, alienation and despair. . . . The eternal and immutable essence of humanity found its representation in the mythical figure of Dionysus."[71]

As such, it is perhaps not surprising that Evola's works continue to be popular and widely read, not only by students of occultism and Hermeticism, but also by a new generation of neo-fascists and right-wing extremists. As Sheehan observes, Evola continues to exert a "deep and continuing impact on the ideology of the far right as evidenced by the energetic republication of his works in recent years."[72] Not only have there been a variety of foundations devoted to him, such as the Evola Foundation in Rome and Centro Studi Evoliani in Genoa, but there has been a remarkable explosion of Evoliana published in the last two decades, through the translation and republication of almost of all of his major works, journals dedicated to him, and a flood of World Wide Web materials. Thus, in his preface to *Introduction to Magic,* Renato Del Ponte offers the hope that the writings of Evola and UR might "provide invaluable material for those individuals who even today, might combine intention and capability in order to repeat the experiences of UR and, if possible, surpass its results on a practical and actualized level."[73] In short, there are many among both occultist and right-wing political factions who continue to find Evola's remarkable combination of sex, magic, and imperial power an attractive alternative amid an increasingly violent and chaotic modern world.

6 The Goddess and the Great Rite

Sex Magic and Feminism in the Neo-Pagan Revival

And ye shall be freed from slavery; and as a sign that ye be really free, ye shall be naked in your rites; and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love.
The Charge from Gerald Gardner's *Book of Shadows*

Witchcraft does not need to apologize for involving sex magic. It is other religions which need to apologize for the miseries of puritanical repression they have inflicted on humanity. We are today in the commencement of a sexual revolution. . . . [O]ne of the most important tasks of the Old Religion in our day is to help nail the Great Lie which humanity has been told for so long: namely that sex was "ordained" solely as a means of procreation within holy wedlock, and nothing else.
DOREEN VALIENTE, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*

By the middle of the twentieth century, all of the various currents of sexual magic—from the early narratives of Gnostic orgies and witches' Sabbaths to the teachings of P. B. Randolph, Aleister Crowley, and the Western versions of Tantra—had begun to flow together and commingle in a number of powerful new ways. One of the most remarkable results of this confluence of magical traditions was the rise of modern witchcraft. Known variously as Wicca, Wicce, the Craft, or simply neo-paganism,[1] these modern magical traditions have become among the largest and most vibrant of the many new religious movements to emerge in the last century.

The primary inspiration for the modern revival of witchcraft was the charmingly peculiar and mischievous figure of Gerald Gardner (1884–1964), who claimed to have been initiated into a witches' coven in the area of New Forest, England, in the 1930s. According to Gardner's narrative, the woman who initiated him was a witch known as "Old Dorothy," who represented an authentic lineage of witchcraft that could be traced back centuries, surviving secretly despite the persecutions of the Christian church. With his own founding of Wiccan covens in the 1950s, Gardner claimed to be continuing this ancient tradition of witch practice today. As Ronald Hutton observes,

Figure 14. Gerald Gardner

most serious historians find it implausible that Gardner's witchcraft has any connection—or even bears any real resemblance—to the pagan traditions that existed in the British Isles before the rise of Christianity. And many critics have suggested that much of Gardner's actual inspiration may have come from none other than Aleister Crowley, from whom he borrowed heavily in his own writings and rituals, particularly the sexually oriented rites.

Nonetheless, even if it is unprovable and perhaps impossible that Gardner's witchcraft really does represent a continuation of some ancient tradition of witchcraft, it should still be taken seriously as a legitimate religious movement that has a large following and exerts a powerful influence today.[2] Above all, I will argue, it should also be taken seriously as a profound reflection of the changing attitudes toward sexuality and gender in the mid twentieth century. An enthusiastic nudist himself, Gardner made nudity and ritualized sexual intercourse in the form of his "Great Rite" key parts of his ritual practice—something fairly radical in 1950s England. The movement as a whole, moreover, placed a powerful new emphasis on the role of the Goddess, the female body, and women as ritual experts that both reflected and influenced the rise of feminism in the second half of the twentieth century.

Like Crowley and his sex magick, Gardner and the rise of neo-paganism reflect many of the new attitudes toward sexuality that followed in the wake of Sigmund Freud, particularly the work of Wilhelm Reich and his "orgone energy." Much like Reich, Gardner believed that the human body contained its own inherent power, which could be awakened and channeled using specific ritual techniques. Gardner in many ways simply extends the notion of biological and sexual energy to the next logical level by imagining it as an intense spiritual power capable of actual magical effects. Many of Gardner's students, such as Doreen Valiente, would in fact make this link to Reich quite explicitly.

By the 1960s, however, modern witchcraft had also become increasingly influenced by and inextricably linked with another powerful sexual force of the latter twentieth century: radical feminism. Indeed, it is no accident that the various forms of neo-paganism, with their central emphasis on sexual liberation, worship of the Goddess, and women's roles as religious authorities, emerged more or less simultaneously with the radical feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Once again, the rise of neo-pagan sexual magic was intimately tied to a search for social and political *liberation*—this time, the liberation of women from what was now described as a two-thousand-year yoke of oppression under patriarchal Christian society.

And yet, despite this valiant and in many ways laudable call for women's liberation, the neo-pagan brand of feminism also seems to bear some fundamental ambivalence and troubling weaknesses. For although it is in one sense empowering for women as spiritual leaders and embodiments of the Goddess, it still remains bound to a highly essentialist and narrow construction of female (and male) gender and sexuality. At the same time that it affirms the sanctity and power of the female body and sexuality, neo-paganism ironically tends to reinforce many of the same old patriarchal stereotypes of male and female gender roles. Thus, in our own generation, a variety of new forms of gay, bisexual, transgender, and other neo-pagan sexual styles have emerged, each in its own way trying to "liberate" its practitioners from the rather confining gender stereotypes established by the witchcraft revival of the twentieth century.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS: GERALD GARDNER AND THE "REDISCOVERY" OF WITCHCRAFT

> Ours is a religion of love, pleasure and excitement. Frail human nature needs a little warmth and comfort to relieve us from the hardness and misery of life and from the cold austerity of the church's preaching—comfort on earth, not in some far-distant paradise beyond the grave.
> GERALD GARDNER, *Witchcraft Today*

The revival of ritual magic and witchcraft in the mid-twentieth century is surely one of the most remarkable phenomena in modern Western history. Indeed, from the 1950s and 1960s onward, we see a kind of wild "mushroomgrowth of the witch-cult" in England, Europe, and the United States, with the proliferation of hundreds of new covens, brotherhoods, and traditions ranging from the Gardnerian Wiccans to the Druids to the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn to the Radical Faeries.[3] And all this amid a rapidly industrializing, increasingly technological and scientistic Western society during the tense decades of the Cold War.

As we have seen throughout this book, much of the rise of modern sexual magic embodies and even epitomizes many of the central ideals of "modernity": for example, the central emphases on individualism, free will, progress, and science. Neo-paganism, conversely, might be said to be an intense reaction against or even retreat from modernity into an idealized premodern vision of human beings living in harmony with the natural world. Some authors have thus described neo-paganism as a response to the "crisis of modernity"—that is, to the profound sense that modern rationality and technological advance have led, not to enlightenment or a utopian society, but to holocaust, war, and the destruction of the natural environment.[4]

Yet whatever its historical causes, the neo-pagan revival represents for many a profound paradigm shift, a fundamental turning away from the destructive values of modern Western society and the birth—or rather, rebirth—of an era of peace and harmony. As Doreen Valiente suggested in her classic *Witchcraft for Tomorrow,* the rebirth of paganism is tied to the dawn of the Aquarian age. With the new stellar and planetary alignment that began in 1962, we are shifting from the old patriarchal, Christian-dominated age of Pisces to the new age of Aquarius, which will see the rebirth of the Goddess, woman, and the earth:

> All over the world, human society is in a state of flux. The forms of the old order are breaking down, so that those of the new order may be built up. . . .
>
> Looking back on all the changes that have taken place since 1962 there seems little doubt that the Great Conjunction . . . did in fact herald a speeding up of the Aquarian transition.[5]

However, even if the rebirth of paganism was somehow tied to this astrological shift beginning in the 1960s, it surely had much older roots in Western history and was part of a long search for alternative gods and goddesses in the West.

Old Gods for a New Age: Roots of the Pagan Revival

> And I rave; and I rape and I rip and I rend
> Everlasting, world without end,
> Mannikin, maiden, maenad, man
> In the might of Pan
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, "Hymn to Pan" (1913)

The neo-pagan revival in England has roots going back to at least the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, if not well before. As Hutton suggests, many British authors of this period discovered a new interest in pre-Christian pagan cultures, including both the mystery traditions and classical Greek and Roman mythology. The Romantic poets of the nineteenth century like Shelley, Keats, and various others took this pagan revival further still, by seeking inspiration in classical mythology and invoking the horned god Pan and the ancient pantheon of goddesses, above all, Venus, Diana, Proserpine, and Ceres.[6]

However, a series of other important figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would also help clear the way for a pagan revival. Among the more important of these was Charles Leland, an American journalist with a strong interest in European folk traditions. While in Italy in 1866, he claimed to have learned of a manuscript containing the secrets of Italian witchcraft, which then formed the basis for his widely read book, *Aradia; or, The Gospel of the Witches* (1899).[7] Still more important for the development of neo-paganism was the quasi-historical narrative suggested by Margaret Murray in her widely influential *Witch-Cult in Western Europe.* According to Murray, there had in fact been a very old tradition of magic and Goddess worship in Europe long before the arrival of Christianity, but this ancient tradition was then misunderstood, demonized, and persecuted as witchcraft by the church. Although Murray's accounts are not taken very seriously by most modern historians, Murray provided the basic narrative that underlay much of the neo-pagan revival of the later twentieth century.[8]

If the "scholarly" and "historical" basis for the neo-pagan revival was provided by Murray, then its practical and ritual foundations were provided in large part by the Great Beast, Aleister Crowley. Not only did Crowley revive many of the pagan deities through his poetry and prose—for example, in his famous "Hymn to Pan"—but he also created a rich new repertoire of magical rituals which, as we will see, were soon incorporated into many early neo-pagan ceremonies, including Gardner's "Great Rite."[9] Finally, Crowley himself had also foreseen the possibility of a neo-pagan revival or the birth of a kind of "natural religion." Already in 1914, he had imagined the rise of a new, this-worldly sort of spirituality, based not on abstract deities but on the primal forces of the sun, moon, and sexuality:

> The time is just ripe for a natural religion. People like rites and ceremonies, and they are tired of hypothetical gods. Insist on the real benefits of the sun, the Mother-Force, the Father-Force and so on; and show that by celebrating these benefits worthily the worshippers united themselves even more fully with the current of life. Let the religion be Joy, but with a worthy and dignified sorrow in death itself, and treat death as an ordeal, an initiation. . . . In short be the founder of a new and greater Pagan cult.[10]

Gardner and others would soon take Crowley up on this call to create a new "pagan cult."

After Crowley, probably the most important figure behind the rise of new pagan forms of sexual magic was Dion Fortune (born Violet Firth [1890–1946]). Fortune was in fact one of the key links between early twentieth-century orders like the OTO and the modern witchcraft begun by Gardner, as well as a key figure in the development of sexual magic. After being initiated into an outer order of the Golden Dawn, Fortune went on to found her own group, the Fraternity of the Inner Light, and publish a wide array of occult books from the 1920s onward.[11]

Throughout her work, Fortune was particularly concerned with the question of sex, both in its abuses and in its sacramental nature. In her early writings, she had been quite prudish regarding sexual matters, warning of the dangers of masturbation, sexual union outside of marriage, and the "mental disease" of homosexuality. In her *Sane Occultism*, she also sternly condemned a "pagan" celebration of free love as an animal way of behavior.[12] Yet in her later work, from the 1930s onward, probably owing in part to the influence of authors like D. H. Lawrence, she began to hold a more positive view of paganism and sexuality.[13] She would also correspond with Crowley himself, from at least 1942 on. Although she thought some of Crowley's practices dangerous, she praised him as a "a genuine adept" and allegedly discussed with him "the possibility of reviving pagan attitudes to cosmic and elemental forces."[14]

Fortune's most explicit discussion of sex and its spiritual significance is her *Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage* (1930). Using terminology that bears a striking resemblance to Wilhelm Reich's "orgone energy," she describes sexual union as the most powerful expression of the "life-force" that flows through all the planes of the universe like an electric current: "[F]or electricity to become active it just flows in a circuit. . . . So it is with the life-force." In a great cosmic circuit, the life-force flows outward from the Divine through the positive, or male, individual, and then back to the

Divine through the negative, or female, individual. In sexual union, the positive and negative, male and female, poles come together in the full manifestation of the divine energy: "At the point of junction between the two units the force can be tapped and rendered available for creation. . . . This is the essence of the esoteric teaching concerning the sex function."[15] Indeed, the conjuncture of positive and negative poles through sexual union creates an intense pool of energy that can then be channeled into magical operations: "When the act of sexual union takes place the subtle forces of the two natures rush together and, as in the case of two currents of water in collision, a whirlpool or vortex is set up: this vortex extends up the planes."[16] As we will see below, this rather "Reichian" view of sexual energy and its magical uses would have a lasting impact on much of the neopagan revival that began in the second half of the twentieth century.

Witch Cult in Modern England: Gerald Gardner and the Birth of Wicca

> Witches are taught and believe that the power resides within their bodies which they can release in various ways, the simple being dancing round in a circle, singing or shouting, to induce a frenzy; this power they believe exudes from their bodies, clothing impeding its release.
>
> GERALD GARDNER, *Witchcraft Today*

Surely the most influential and controversial figure in the modern revival of witchcraft and paganism was Gerald Gardner. Revered by some as the man who revealed an ancient tradition of magic and Goddess worship long suppressed by the Christian church, and dismissed by many as a crackpot charlatan who fabricated a nostalgic fantasy, Gardner was a pivotal figure in the history of Western esotericism and sexual magic in the mid-twentieth century. Dubbed by the press "Britain's Chief Witch," Gardner would also become by the late 1950s both a media celebrity and a tantalizing scandal. As Valiente described him during his ritual ceremonies in the 1950s, Gardner was a striking figure indeed, the perfect type to instigate a witchcraft revival: "tall, stark naked, with wild white hair, a sun-tanned body, and arms which bore tattoo and heavy bronze bracelet. In one hand he brandished Old Dorothy's sword while in the other he held the handwritten Book of Shadows as he read the ritual."[17]

Gardner's biography is itself the subject of some controversy, since it was credited to one "Jack Bracelin" but was most likely written by Idries Shah, a widely read popularizer of Sufism and other mystical traditions.[18] Born at Blendellsands near Liverpool of Scottish descent, Gardner claimed among his ancestors Grissell Gardner, who was allegedly burned as a witch in Newburgh Scotland in 1610.[19] Gardner spent much of his early life first as the manager of tea and rubber plantations in South and Southeast Asia, from Ceylon to Malaya, and then later as an inspector in the Malay customs service. He would also develop a strong interest in a wide array of occult, supernatural, and mystical phenomena, reading widely about Freemasonry, Buddhism, and various other Eastern and Western esoteric traditions.

In 1936, Gardner retired to London, then moved to New Forest two years later. And it was here that he claims to have met the mysterious "Old Dorothy"—a woman he identified as a genuine witch belonging to an ancient tradition of pagan witchcraft that had survived for centuries under the surface of Christian rule. It was she who allegedly initiated Gardner into her coven and introduced him to the ancient Craft. There is at present much uncertainty about this curious woman, Old Dorothy: Was she in fact a representative of some form of witchcraft? Did she exist at all, or was she largely a figment of Gardner's own lively imagination? The woman identified as Old Dorothy was actually named Dorothy Clutterbuck (d. 1951), who had inherited a comfortable private income and then married Rupert Fordham. A major society figure, Dorothy resided at a mansion called Latimers, which appears to have been the house where Gardner claimed to have been initiated. Well respected in their community and known for their conservative politics, Dorothy and her husband were both "exceptionally committed Tories, Dorothy being even more dedicated to the party than her husband."[20]

In short, if it is true that Dorothy Clutterbuck was in fact a practicing witch who initiated Gardner into an ancient pagan tradition, then surely she must have lived one of the most remarkably double lives in history, "a pillar of conservatism and respectability who was also the leader of one witch coven and capable of summoning others."[21] Dorothy's own diaries from the years 1942–43—the period when she was allegedly working as a witch reveal nothing that has any relation to occultism or paganism. As Hutton concludes, there is serious reason to doubt the assertion that Clutterbuck was a witch; on the other hand, there are good reasons to think that Gardner might have misrepresented her as one. He may have been indulging his own mischievous sense of humor by identifying this conservative old Tory as a secret witch; or, alternatively, he may have been pointing to Dorothy in order to cleverly misdirect attention away from a real witch in the area who did initiate him into the craft.[22]

There are many critics, however, who believe that Gardner's primary inspiration was not this mysterious Old Dorothy, but rather the most notorious magician of his day, Aleister Crowley. Gardner claimed to have met the Beast shortly before Crowley's death in 1946—describing him as a "charming charlatan"[23]—and to have been initiated into the OTO (according to Crowley's diaries, however, Gardner only visited the Beast once briefly in 1947, when he was quite ill). Another popular legend suggests that Crowley told Gardner he had been a member of a witch cult as a young man, but left it because "'he refused to be bossed around by any damn woman,' and could not understand the lack of financial profit in it."[24]

Regardless of the truth of these narratives, it is clear that Gardner had great admiration for Crowley and drew freely from his poetry and rituals in his own magical works. The most important of Gardner's works for most Wiccans today is *The Book of Shadows,* essentially a ritual guide which bears strong influences from Crowley, the OTO, Golden Dawn, Freemasonry, and other esoteric traditions. As Hutton has shown, *The Book of Shadows* is itself a refined version of a predecessor text called *Ye Bok of ye Art Magical* (essentially a notebook consisting of passages from a range of sources, including biblical verses, the Key of Solomon, the Goetia, a work on the Kabbalah, three different books by Crowley, the Waite-Smith tarot pack, and various grimoires).[25] *The Book of Shadows* existed in various forms, and according to Janet and Stewart Farrar, there were at least three versions of the text. The first consisted of rituals allegedly hand-copied from the New Forest coven, with Gardner's amendments, which were very much influenced by the OTO. The second was the more developed version Gardner was using when he initiated Doreen Valiente in 1953, which shows the heavy influence of Crowley. And the third is the version that Gardner and Valiente revised together, which in fact eliminated much of the "inappropriate" Crowleyian material: "The final version which Gardner and Doreen produced together . . . eliminated much of the OTO and Crowley material which Gardner had introduced; Doreen felt, and persuaded Gardner, that in many places 'this was not really suitable for the Old Craft of the Wise.'"[26] This apparent embarrassment or distaste for the lingering influence of Crowley in the neo-pagan tradition is one that continues to trouble witches to this day.

Whatever its origins, Gardner claimed to have rediscovered the inner secrets of witchcraft, which he in turn passed on to a new generation of witches throughout England, Europe, and the United States. Gardner claims that he was first given permission to represent some of the witch beliefs and practices in the disguised form of a novel in 1949, *High Magic's Aid.* After the repeal of England's witchcraft laws in 1951, Gardner was emboldened to publish these ancient secrets more openly in works such as *Witchcraft Today* (1954). Like Margaret Murray before him, Gardner here identifies the central deity of the witch tradition as the Great Goddess or Great Mother, associated with the forces of nature, fertility, and earthly pleasure: "The goddess of the witch cult is obviously the Great Mother, the giver of life, incarnate love. She rules spring, pleasure, feasting and all the delights."[27] Her worship, he believes, is older than recorded history, going back to the earliest human culture and to an ancient matriarchal social order. It was only much later, with the rise of patriarchal religions and a male-dominated social order, that this ancient witch religion was pushed underground. "It is a Stone Age cult of the matriarchal times, when woman was the chief; at a later time, man's god become dominant, but the woman's cult [illegible] continued as a distinct order."[28]

Already in the 1940s, Gardner began to practice rituals in honor of the Goddess and her witch cult. His first known ritual partner was a teacher of music and elocution described as an "elegant, graceful lady with dark hair," whom he called "Dafo" (who some believe may have been the real figure behind Old Dorothy).[29] In 1947 Gardner and Dafo bought a piece of land adjacent to a naturist club near St. Albans, north of London, Gardner himself being a member of the club and an enthusiastic nudist. The couple then built a remarkable reconstruction of a sixteenth-century witch's cottage, complete with cabalistic designs on the walls: "It provided a very atmospheric setting for a working group of magicians, on a secluded site next to a club from which some . . . of its membership would be drawn and which could provide a cover for its activities."[30] By the early 1950s a lively coven was flourishing there, and the neo-pagan movement was effectively born.

The name Gardner gave his new witch cult was initially "Wica," later changed to "Wicca," which is the most widely known and popularized spelling today. There is some debate among scholars and practitioners as to the precise origin and meaning of this term. The only known source for the word in Gardner's spelling is *Chamber's Dictionary of Scots-English*, where it means "wise"; the later adaptation probably derives from the connotation of the Anglo-Saxon *wicca*, meaning a male witch (female version *wicce*). A popular theory today is that it derives from a much older Proto-Indo-European root meaning "to bend" or "to shape," but this seems unlikely. The only thing known with any certainty is that it is cognate with other words in old Germanic languages meaning "sacricifer," "adviser," or "diviner."[31]

As Gardner described it in *Witchcraft Today*, the organization of the Wiccan coven sounds much like the stereotyped version found in Murray's work or in various popular accounts of the witches' Sabbath—a circle of thirteen witches engaged in naked dance and sexual union:

> Traditionally this consists of six perfect couples and a leader; preferably, the couples are husbands and wives or at least betrothed. That is, they should be lovers, in sympathy with each other. . . . These dances are intoxicating, and this intoxication is the condition for producing what they call magic.[32]

The core of magic, according to Gardner, is the awakening and use of power: "The essence of magic is usually to raise power, then to use or control it."[33] This power can be awakened by a wide range of practical techniques, and the witch is encouraged to use "many (or all) of them combined in one operation to gain all the power she can." The most important techniques are the use of dance, chanting, ecstatic movement designed to enter a state of frenzy: "To do magic you must work yourself into a frenzy; the more intense you feel, the more chance of success."[34]

The power raised by such rituals was said to be great indeed. According to one widespread legend about the New Forest coven, Old Dorothy had summoned a gathering of numerous covens in order to combat the immanent threat of German invasion in 1940. Undertaking "Operation Cone of Power," the witches allegedly raised a great mass of magical energy which was then directed against Hitler, just "as one had according to traditions against the Spanish Armada and Napoleon."[35] (Interestingly enough, Amado Crowley—who claims to be one of Aleister Crowley's illegitimate sons—has argued that it was really Crowley who performed the ritual, called "Operation Mistletoe"; indeed, Amado suggests that the Beast had been contacted by the M15 itself to add an occult dimension to the war against Hitler).[36]

FREEDOM AND NUDITY:
SEXUAL MAGIC AND THE GREAT RITE

> At the Great Sabbath the living body of a priestess does form the altar. We worship the divine spirit of Creation, which is the Life-spring of the world. . . . Are we then so abominable? . . . To us it is the most sacred and holy mystery, proof of the God in us whose command is: Go forth and multiply.
>
> GERALD GARDNER, *High Magic's Aid*

> There is an indefinable magical element about sex, which people have been conscious of ever since the beginning of time. This is why it has always been hedged about with so many rules and regulations by those who have sought rulership over their fellow humans. In particular, the subjugation of woman, the dangerous temptress has been built into most of the world religions.
>
> DOREEN VALIENTE, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*

For many neo-pagans today, the use of sex in ritual practice is a rather controversial and, for many, quite embarrassing topic. Ritualized sexual intercourse was clearly an important part of Gardner's *Book of Shadows* and his early practice. Perhaps owing to the influence of Crowley, Gardner would make ritualized sexual union—the "Great Rite"—the centerpiece of the third and final degree of initiation into the craft. Yet oddly enough, many pagans today either deny or bend over backward to rationalize, apologize for, or otherwise downplay the existence of such practices within their communities.[37]

Gardner himself had an extremely positive view of the human body in all its aspects, including the sexual. As a practicing naturist himself, he believed in the importance of performing rituals "sky clad," that is, practicing communal nakedness during rituals as a means of awakening, releasing, and channeling the power that lies within the human body: "It is important to work naked form the start, so it becometh as second nature, and no thought 'I have no clothes on' shall ever intrude. . . . Also, your skin being so accustomed to unconfinement, when power is given off the flow is more easy and regular."[38] In a passage that reads a great deal like Reich's orgone energy theory, Gardner suggests that power lies dormant in the body and needs to be drawn out and harnessed by means of various ritual techniques: chanting, dancing, shrieking, scourging, and ultimately, the divine union of the Great Rite:

> Power is latent in the body and may be drawn out and used in various ways by the skilled. But unless confined in a circle it will be swiftly dissipated. . . . Power seems to exude from the body via the skin and possibly from the orifices of the body. . . .
>
> The simplest way is by dancing and singing monotonous chants, slowly at first and gradually quickening the tempo until giddiness ensues. Then calls may be used, or even wild and meaningless shrieking produces power. . . . The scourge is a far better way, for it stimulates and excites both the body and soul. . . .
>
> The Great Rite is far the best. It releases enormous power, but the conditions and circumstances make it difficult for the mind to maintain control at first.[39]

Indeed, more than one observer has directly compared Gardner's ritual nudity and sexual rites to Reich's orgone energy, the mysterious vital force that emanates from all things. As Valiente herself remarks, "Wilhelm Reich believed that the energy he had discovered, orgone energy, was the basic pre-atomic energy which pervades everything. All other energies are modifications of this basic energy . . . all living substances radiate orgone."[40]

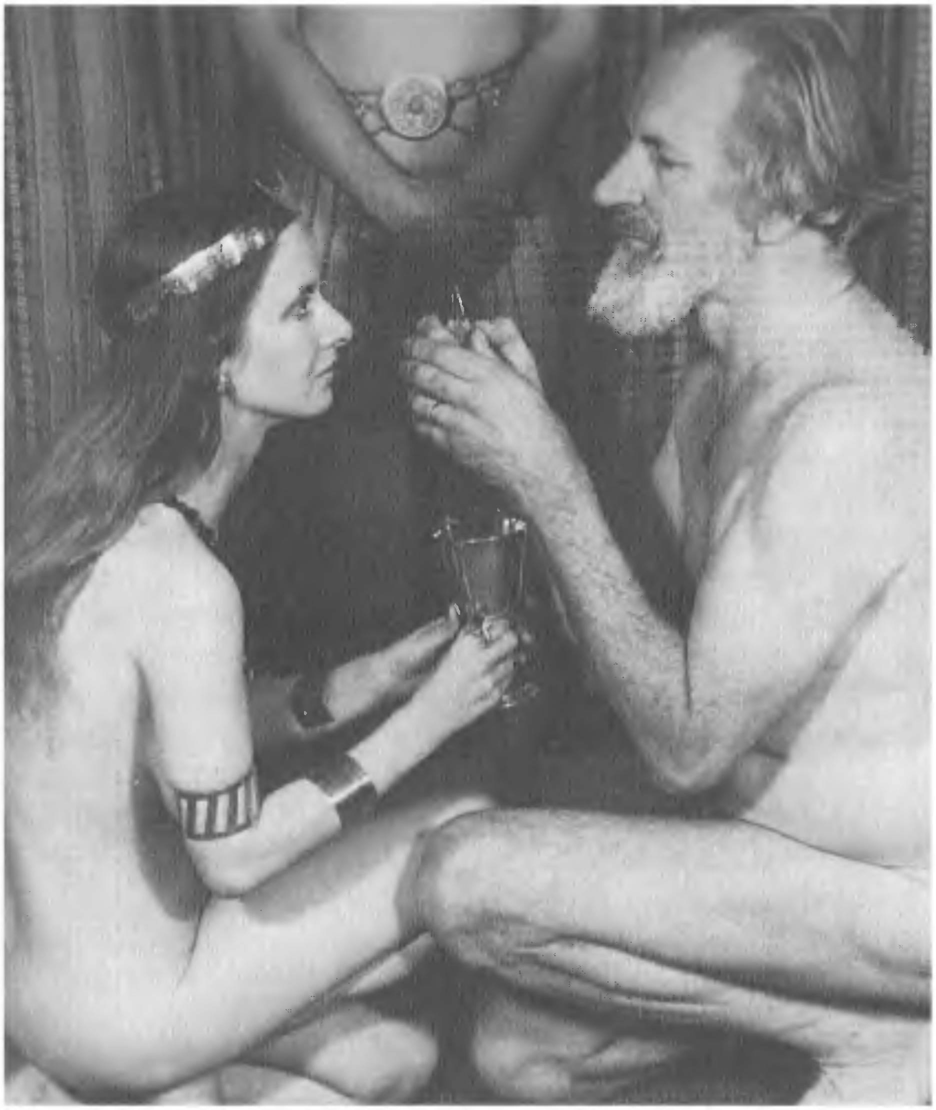


Figure 15. The Great Rite. From Janet Farrar and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible: The Complete Witches' Handbook* (Custer, WA: Phoenix, 1996).

Sexual rites and nudity had already been an important part of Gardner's novel *High Magic's Aid,* which was alleged to have been a disguised way of revealing some of the actual practices he learned in the New Forest coven. A story of romantic adventure during political upheaval and military violence in the central Middle Ages, *High Magic's Aid* centers around a Magus and a pair of brothers who join forces with a powerful witch named Morven. Much of the witchcraft depicted in the story is clearly directly taken from Murray's *God of the Witches,* including the accounts of the witches sabbats and their deities. Throughout the novel, Gardner's witch heroine repeatedly removes her clothing in order to perform magical rites; indeed, her nakedness is the sign of her religious authority: "I am in my woman's gear, and so must I remain . . . for I am Priestess, and so must appear as their Priestess, or I lose my power, so clothes are forbidden me."[41] As Hutton observes, Gardner's novel seems to reveal a certain "preoccupation with the magical and religious power of the nude female beauty," and the form of magic it describes centers primarily around the powerful dynamism of sexual polarity and the magnetic force that emanates from the naked human body.[42]

However, the most important performance of sexual magic in Gardner's witchcraft is the Great Rite. According to Gardner's *Book of Shadows*, the Great Rite, or sexual union, marks the third and final grade of initiation into the Craft. As the Farrars explain, the Great Rite holds such an important status because it embodies three of the basic principles of witchcraft: "First, that the basis of all magical or creative working is polarity, the interaction of complementary systems. Second, that we are of the nature of the Gods and a fully realized man or woman is a channel for that divinity, a manifestation of the God or the Goddess. . . . And third, that all the levels from the physical to the spiritual are equally holy."[43]

The ritual as a whole is a celebration of the human body, which itself becomes a sacred vessel. Throughout the rite, the central symbolism is the polarity of male and female. Thus, the cup of wine is said to be the "feminine" ritual element, while the athame, or short sword, is the masculine, and the lowering of the athame, or "lance," into the "grail" is a symbolic sexual union. The female body is itself the "altar" in the ritual, with her vagina located in the center of the circle, while the male is the bearer of the "lifted lance," or phallus. Ultimately, the male and female celebrants themselves become the embodiments of the God and Goddess, who are united through their human vehicles in the ritual: "The Great Rite is the union of god and goddess, of heaven and earth, the fusion of polarities. The Horned One and the Earth unite in ecstasy and rapture. . . . The Great Rite is the . . . climax of magical art, ecstasy and meditation; it is the most sacred ritual."[44] The following portion of the Great Rite is taken from Janet and Stewart Farrar's edition of the *Book of Shadows*,

> *Assist me to erect the ancient altar, at which in days past all worshipped,*
> *The Great Altar of all things;*
> *For in old times, Woman was the altar.*
> *Thus was the altar made and placed;*
> *And the sacred point was the point within the center of the circle.*

> *As we have of old been taught that the point within the centre is the origin of all things,*
> *Therefore should we adore it.* [Kiss]
> *Therefore, whom we adore we also invoke, by the power of the lifted Lance*
> (He touches his own phallus . . .)
>
> *O Secret of Secrets,*
> *Thou art hidden in the being of all lives*
>
> . . . .
>
> *I am the flame that burns in the heart of every man,*
> *And in the core of ever star.*
>
> . . . .
>
> *I am alone, the Lord within ourselves,*
> *Whose name is Mystery of Mysteries.*[45]

As the Farrars point out, an earlier version of the *Book of Shadows* had been even more explicit in its reference to the sexual nature of the rite; the second version of the text simply refers to "genitals," while the third substitutes the "Lance-and-Grail metaphor."[46] Gardner's original rite also calls for a series of "scourgings"—the male scourged by the female, the female by the male, and the male again by the female—though many witches feel that Gardner was "too fond of scourging" and may have had a "psychologically unhealthy addiction to flagellation."[47] Hence the scourge is often omitted in the rite as practiced today.

Despite its claims to ancient pagan origins, much of the rite is clearly drawn from the works of Crowley and the OTO, particularly from the Gnostic Mass, which Crowley wrote for the order. As Hutton observes, "The consecration of the wine was probably modeled upon the sixth degree initiation of the OTO itself, in which a man dipped the point of a holy lance in a cup of wine held by a woman."[48] Likewise, the Farrars point out that the entire blessing of the cakes "was taken from Crowley's Gnostic Mass."[49]

As several scholars have observed, another possible influence for Gardner's Great Rite may have been the sexual rituals of Hindu Tantra. By the 1940s, Tantra was well known in England, both through the scandalous activities of Crowley and through the various works of Avalon/Woodroffe. As Hutton points out, the organization of Gardner's coven as a circle made up of male-female couples is very similar to the organization of the Tantric *chakra puja* and the practice of the "five Ms": "Crowley had drawn in turn upon oriental traditions of tantra, and it is possible that Gardner made direct borrowings from these himself, either from his own experience in the East or through English works such as *Shakti and Shakta* by Arthur

Avalon."[50] Doreen Valiente herself has also pointed out the striking similarities of Tantric ritual and the Great Rite. Like witchcraft, she argues, Tantra was long associated with "unspeakable rites," "nameless orgies, and so on"; like witchcraft, it was forced to become secret and go underground; and like witchcraft, Tantra celebrates the inherent sanctity of the human body and sexuality. Hence it is likely that the two were at one time connected in our prehistoric past: "These basic ideas of the great cosmic sacred marriage and its reflection at the human level, of the use of the sexual act as a sacrament . . . seem to indicate that what became Tantra in the East became witchcraft in the West."[51] Indeed, Valiente suggests that it is not only possible but natural and even important that modern Western witches adapt some of the sexual techniques of eastern Tantra; this is simply another example of the world spinning and coming round again, reuniting the currents of East and West in a new age of magic:

> It will be seen from the foregoing how naturally it has followed, in accordance with the evolving trends of the Aquarian Age, that modern witches should adapt the Tantric sexual magic for use in their own private and magic circles. . . . Everything in this world is flowing. . . . The spiral has come round again, to its ancient place, but higher. What appears to be borrowing from another tradition is really the reuniting of many things which have proceeded from a common source.[52]

Like both Crowley and the Hindu Tantrikas, moreover, Gardner believed that sexual union could be a source of tremendous magical power—indeed, even the greatest magical force of all. If both man and woman focus completely on a desired goal, fixing their will and imagination upon it, they may magically alter the course of events in the physical world:

> This rite may be used as the greatest of magics if it be done both partners firmly fixing their minds on their object and not thinking of sex at all. That is, you must so firmly fix your mind on your object that sex and all else are naught. You inflame your will to such an extent that you may create a strain on the astral that events happen.[53]

The Farrars explain the effects of sexual magic in the Great Rite in more detail, using language drawn from Dion Fortune's *Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage* (which, again, sounds a great deal like Reich's orgone energy). At the moment of simultaneous orgasm, a vortex of power is created that can be channeled toward the fulfillment of a magical goal:

> Once they have joined their bodies in coitus, if they have sufficient control they may even keep quite still for a while, building up the sexual tension-in-unity to the highest possible peak. . . . When they are ready, they will aim

> at simultaneous orgasm, at which point they will hurl the whole power of the vortex into the achievement of the magical objective. . . .
>
> Sex magic of this kind should not be used too often.[54]

However, most later neo-pagans also warn sternly of the potential dangers of this sort of powerful sexual magic. According to the Farrars, sexual magic lends itself all too easily to abuse by selfish and insincere individuals. It should only be practiced by loving, dedicated couples—ideally husband and wife—and only in the context of a loving relationship:

> "Sex magic" . . . can be very powerful, both in its effect in terms of the intended outcome of the work and in its effect on the couple concerned. . . . And we would say categorically; *sex magic as such should only be worked by a couple for whom intercourse is a normal part of their relationship*—in other words, husband and wife or established lovers. . . . For a couple not so related, it could be very dangerous indeed. . . .
>
> Sex magic without love is black magic.[55]

Here we see a clear reaction against the radically transgressive, homoerotic, and autoerotic sex magick of Crowley and a return to the more conservative, heterosexual sort of magic described by P. B. Randolph and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. Indeed, many if not most neo-pagans today de-emphasize or eschew altogether the practice of the Great Rite in its literal form and typically work very hard to distance themselves from the explicitly transgressive magic of the Great Beast.

Sexual Power and Social Liberation

> Witchcraft . . . is a rival religion to Christianity, a religion of love, pleasure and excitement. Therefore does the Church suppress it with fire and many huntings. . . . The Church fears a mass return to the old gods. . . . 'Tis little wonder many return to witchcraft, and seek relief from the . . . cold austerity of the Church's teaching.
>
> GERALD GARDNER, *High Magic's Aid*

With his sacralization of the human body and sex through the Great Rite, Gardner was clearly following in the tradition of Crowley, D. H. Lawrence, and other post-Victorian figures who rejected the oppressive prudery of the nineteenth century and called for a new celebration of sexuality in its most deliciously transgressive forms:

> In its symbolism, the witch religion publicized by Gardner carried forward that resacralization of sexuality and the human body which had been a feature of the magic(k) of Crowley and of the writings of D. H. Lawrence and Havelock Ellis. . . . The eroticism encoded in the rites was intensified by the tradition that all participants worked naked, something that was a feature of

> the witches' sabbats imagined by early modern writers (as part of the general transgression of moral codes imputed to them).[56]

Like Crowley, Reich, and others, however, Gardner also received his share of criticism from both the popular press and the scholarly community. Not only did the British press have a field day with his nocturnal nude gatherings, but even respected scholars like Francis King took frequent potshots at Gardner, whom they dismissed as a mere "sado-masochist with both a taste for flagellation and marked voyeuristic tendencies."[57]

Ironically, however, most of Gardner's rituals look fairly tame by contemporary sexual standards, and many of the same publications that once ridiculed him for his obscene promiscuity now print materials far more explicit than any of Gardner's works:

> When Gerald Gardner first revealed the present-day practice of witchcraft . . . his statements about the communal nakedness of witchcraft rites provoked a good deal of shock and scandal. . . . Today, however, times have changed. It is rather amusing to note that newspapers which formerly published articles attacking this "evil cult" . . . now specialize in providing their readers with luscious portraits of nude young ladies.[58]

Indeed, one might well argue that Gardner foresaw and even helped clear the way for the various cultural and sexual revolutions of the 1960s. This was already apparent in his nude rituals, which gained such notoriety in the 1950s, but it is even more obvious in the works of his students like Doreen Valiente. For Valiente, as for Crowley and Reich, sexual repression is directly related to political repression, war, violence, and bloodshed. For both sexual and political repression are attempts to destroy what is natural and good in human nature:

> [T]here is profound truth in the slogan . . . make love, not war. Is it really a coincidence that the hideous events of killing and maiming which have taken place in Northern Ireland within recent years have come to pass in a community which is ruled in a religious sense by anti-sex repression, both Catholic and Protestant? Let us look, too, at other countries where horror and bloodshed abound. How often do we see this accompanied by a sexual ethic which advocates repression? . . .
>
> What is the root cause of mindless violence? One of the causes . . . is the sheer pressure of natural desire denied its natural satisfaction, especially among the young.[59]

Thus, Valiente explicitly links the neo-pagan revival to the sexual revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, both of which represent a rejection of political oppression and a recognition of the inherent goodness of sexual pleasure. For if the sexual revolution means that men and women "have a right to sexual satisfaction in this life," then "one of the most important tasks of the Old Religion in our day is to help nail the Great Lie which humanity has been told for so long: namely that sex is something which was 'ordained' solely as a means of procreation within 'holy wedlock.'"[60] As such, Gardner's neo-pagan revival would also have a profound impact on the rising women's movements of the 1960s and the search for liberation in radical feminism.

TRIUMPH OF THE GODDESS: FEMINISM AND PAGANISM

> The Background into which feminist journeying spins is the wild realm of Hags and Crones.
>
> MARY DALY, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*

> You are a Witch by saying aloud, "I am a Witch," three times, and thinking about that. You are a Witch by being female, untamed, angry, joyful and immortal.
>
> ROBIN MORGAN, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful*

It is surely no coincidence that the revival of witchcraft in the latter half of the twentieth century occurred simultaneously with the "second wave" and "radical" forms of feminism that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Particularly with the publication of books like the enormously popular *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 1973, the female body and sexuality emerged as "a central terrain of politics."[61] Although Gardner himself was by no means a "feminist," the movement he inspired quickly merged with the rising tide of radical feminism in the United States and England from the mid-1960s on. And it is not difficult to see why. The two movements shared a great deal in common, including a fierce rejection of patriarchal culture and the religious institutions—above all Christianity—that supported it; a new affirmation of female power; a new celebration of the female body and sexuality as something unique and different from male sexuality; and a search for new symbols and narratives to replace the old, oppressive symbols of patriarchal culture. As Elizabeth Puttick observes, "Paganism is . . . the only religion that contains a specifically, consciously feminist branch: feminist witchcraft."[62]

To cite just one of the more influential and controversial figures in the radical feminist movement, Mary Daly launched a powerful critique of the patriarchal structure of the Christian church in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She would also create intense controversy when she refused to allow men into her classes at Boston College, arguing that women need a space in which to find their own voices apart from the domineering forces of patriarchy. As she argued in *Beyond God the Father* in 1973, women need to generate a kind of "divine rage" in order to deconstruct and move beyond the "biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven"; indeed, they need to "castrate God" in order to free themselves from an icon that has for millennia justified a patriarchal domestic, social, and political system: "Breaking out of the circle requires anger, the 'wrath of God' speaking God-self in an organic surge of life. . . . [R]age is required as a positive creative force, making possible a breakthrough."[63]

In her later works, such as *Gyn/Ecology,* Daly calls not only for the "exorcism of the internalized Godfather in his various manifestations (his name is legion)," but also for a return to the great Goddesses of the ancient world who had been repressed by patriarchal culture.[64] "The ancient world," Daly argues, "knew no gods. Fatherhood was not honored." But as patriarchy become the dominant social structure, the older gynocentric society was persecuted and eradicated, culminating in the European witch craze. "The intent was to break down and destroy strong women, to dis-member and kill the Goddess, the divine spark of be-ing in women. The intent was to purify society . . . of such women."[65] To recover female power, therefore, means to recover that "hag-like" knowledge that has so long been feared by patriarchal culture: "Patriarchal males have always dreaded . . . the labyrinthine know-ing of women. The Beatific Visions of Hags and Harpies means mortal danger to the foreground fathers, who see this as a descent into hell."[66]

Much of Daly's feminist critique is echoed in the early neo-pagan movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The usual narrative retold throughout neo-pagan literature is the same basic story of an ancient matriarchal tradition of Goddess-worship that was progressively driven underground by the male-dominated monotheistic religions. Yet the primordial religion of the Great Mother has survived on the margins and beneath the surface of patriarchal religion:

> [The patriarchal epoch] is the period of male domination of human society which established its hold . . . during the last couple of millennia BC. . . . Patriarchal rule . . . has been pretty well universal in the two millennia AD and is only now being seriously challenged. It has been characterized by the dictatorship of the God, the King, the Priest, the Father and the total subordination of the Goddess, the Queen, the Priestess. . . .
>
> But one thing is certain: the Goddess preceded the God in human worship."[67]

Two of the most influential figures in the neo-pagan movement in the United States—namely, Z Budapest and Starhawk—have also been con-

Figure 16. Starhawk. Courtesy of Starhawk.

troversial feminists and political activists. Born in Hungary in 1940, Z Budapest is the daughter of a psychic medium and Tarot-card reader named Masika Szilagyi and claims a psychic lineage going back to the fourteenth century. After coming to the United States at age nineteen and then moving to Los Angeles in 1970, Z has become one of the most influential figures in the popularization of feminine spirituality in America. As Z puts it, women have been systematically exploited, raped, and ripped off by the dominant patriarchal order, and it is about time they woke up and reclaimed their rightful power:

> [W]omen's culture has been ripped off by the ruling class. This resulted in a stunted self-image of women which resulted in insecurities, internalizing the cultural expectations of us created by male culture-makers. Most of the women in the world still suffer from this spiritual poverty.[68]

In much the same way that Mary Daly generated controversy at Boston College for excluding men from her classrooms, Z has been controversial for her exclusion of men from her "Dianic worship." As she argues, women need a space in which they can worship as and with women, free from the oppressive influence of males: "We have women's circles. You don't put men in women's circles. . . . Our goddess is life, and women should be free to worship from their ovaries."[69]

In 1975, Z caused still more controversy when she was arrested and charged with fortune-telling after giving an undercover policewoman a Tarot card reading. Outraged at the charge, she described herself as "the first witch to go on trial for her belief in 300 years." Declaring herself a religious leader and high priestess, she demanded her freedom of belief under the First Amendment. Although the trial resulted in a $300 fine and a probation order, it did succeed in forcing many Americans to take paganism seriously as a growing new religious movement with a powerful appeal to women as religious leaders.[70]

Even more politically active than Z, Starhawk (also known as Miriam Simos) set out explicitly to conjoin pagan spirituality, feminism, and environmental activism in a powerful movement for change. From her high school years during the anti–Vietnam War demonstrations, Starhawk has been active in a wide range of political and environmental protests, including antinuclear actions at Diablo Canyon, Livermore Weapons Lab, Vandenberg Air Force Base, and the Nevada Test Site. She also continues to hold her Earth Activist Training seminars in both Europe and the United States, which combine permaculture design, political activism, and earth-based spirituality. Her cofounded neo-pagan movement "Reclaiming" is described as "a network of people who combine activism with earth-based spirituality and healing, and offers classes, intensives, public rituals, and training in the Goddess tradition and magical activism."[71]

For Starhawk, the empowering spiritual force of the Goddess is central to her larger social and political agendas. For it gives her—and all women a sense of connection with the Great Mother and eternal feminine force that runs through all of creation. By participating in witchcraft rituals, women can not only connect intellectually with the Goddess, but actually discover the Goddess within themselves and realize their own identity with her. "In the Craft, we do not *believe* in the Goddess—we connect with her, through the moon, the stars, the ocean, the earth, through trees, animals, through other human beings, through ourselves. . . . She is within us all"; as such, she is the most powerful means for women today to overcome the patriarchal past and be reborn as divine, creative beings themselves:

> This symbolism of the Goddess has taken on an electrifying power for modern women. The rediscovery of the ancient matrifocal civilization has given us a deep sense of pride in woman's ability to create and sustain culture. It has exposed the falsehoods of patriarchal history and given us models of female strength and authority. The Goddess . . . is recognized once again

> in today's world. . . . She is the vaginal passage, through which we are reborn.[72]

And perhaps the most powerful means of rediscovering and reconnecting with the Goddess is through a rediscovery and liberation of women's sexuality.

God Is Coming, and She Is Pissed!
From Divine Rage to Women's Sexual Liberation

> Sexuality—"sexual brightness"—freed from the shackles of obligatory breeding is what makes us specifically human. . . . Sexual relatedness is a great creative force at all levels, not merely the procreative; and when the patriarchal system, particularly in the shape of a celibate hierarchy, tries to deny or distort that truth, it is blinding itself to reality.
> ANET FARRAR and STEWART FARRAR, *The Witches' Way*

> Sex is an exchange of power in the form of energy that flows between two beings. But the culture of estrangement distorts all power into power-over, into domination. . . . The erotic becomes another arena of domination and submission. . . . A true transformation of our culture would require reclaiming the erotic as power-from-within, as empowerment.
> STARHAWK, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics*

For many feminist witches, to recover the power of the Great Mother therefore requires its own sort of "divine rage," in Daly's sense. Indeed, the shift from a male to a female deity, replacing God as the patriarchal judge and punisher with the Goddess as the Great Mother and spirit of Creation, is itself a courageous political statement: "Feminist witchcraft elevates woman's nature above man's nature in its life-giving abilities . . . feminist witches describe themselves as committing a 'political act' when they replace the Father with the Mother."[73] According to the manifesto of WITCH, an actively political neo-pagan movement, in 1968, to be a witch means to be a kind of guerilla resistance fighter; it means boldly defying the "Imperialist Phallic Society" that has long controlled and is now destroying our world:

> WITCH is in all-woman. . . . It's theater, revolution, magic, terror, joy. . . . It's an awareness that witches and gypsies were the original guerillas and resistance fighters against oppression—particularly the oppression of women—down through the ages. Witches have always been women who dared to be: groovy, courageous, aggressive, intelligent, nonconformist . . . sexually liberated, revolutionary. . . . They bowed to no man, being the living remnants of the oldest culture of all . . . before the death-dealing, sexual, economic and spiritual repression of the Imperialist Phallic Society took over and began to destroy nature and human society.[74]

Perhaps most importantly, for many neo-pagans, female liberation and empowerment goes hand in hand with its necessary counterpart, *sexual liberation.* It demands the full freedom and empowerment of women's bodies through naked ritual and sensual joy:

> Sexual conditioning over the past couple of thousand years or so has ingrained the ideas that nakedness equals sex, and that sex equals danger. Sexuality and in particular female sexuality—to the patriarchal mind stands for the Shadow, for all the unmanageable depths of the psyche which cannot be disciplined, ordered and contained. . . . Witches . . . refuse to play the patriarchal game. And taking off their clothes for their rituals is one sign of that refusal. [75]

Thus, as Starhawk argues in her widely read *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics,* the liberation of female sexuality is itself a political act. It is a direct challenge to all systems of oppression that would control or suppress the natural, sensual, inherently divine forces within the human body, which are most powerfully expressed in the sexual instincts, organs, and fluids:

> A fear runs like a thread through Western culture—from the Church Fathers through Freud—that sexuality, if unleashed from the control of the internalized authority . . . would run wild and destroy civilization.
>
> [N]o one can love freely in a society based on domination. Yet the public struggle against domination cannot be waged . . . unless we bring to it a sense of personal power . . . based on the electric, erotic spark of the earth's energy running freely through our bodies.
>
> That spark can sustain our struggle until we can learn to meet as equals, free in our bodies. . . . Until we can become, in our lovemaking, . . . cats on the back fence, jaguars, tigers, jungle birds—until . . . our tongues, like bear's tongues taste the honey of each other's bodies—until our blood and our semen again become sacred substances of power.[76]

Yet this radical liberation of feminine sexual energy is a deeply ambivalent one, a liberation that bears perhaps new forms of suppression and restriction as well.

Women Are from the Moon, Men Are from the Sun? Feminism and Essentialism in the Neo-pagan Movement

> [W]e are utterly heterosexual ourselves, and our own concept of Wicca is built around natural maleness and femaleness of mind, body and spirit.
>
> JANET FARRAR and STEWART FARRAR, *The Witches' Way*

> As blacks were defined and limited socially by their color, so women are defined and limited by their sex. . . . The Sky-god tramples through the heavens and the Earth/Mother Goddess is always flat on her back with her legs spread, putting out for one and all.
>
> MARLENE DIXON, "Why Women's Liberation?"

While there is much to be praised in the feminist pagans' search for women's liberation and celebration of the female body, much of their discourse also raises some troubling problems. Most importantly, the feminist pagans fall into many of the same often self-defeating forms of essentialism as do most of the second wave feminists like Daly. As more recent critics like Judith Butler have argued, feminist theory has long assumed that there is some fixed essential identity understood by the category of "women" and that this singular category of women has in turn been universally dominated by a monolithic patriarchal structure. Unfortunately, Butler argues, this sort of naive essentialism does not really dismantle the structure of domination and oppression; it merely *inverts* it, by making men the universal oppressive villains of history and women the universal victims. But it still continues to define maleness and femaleness in simplistic binary terms as fundamentally distinct and mutually exclusive categories:

> Feminist critique ought to explore the totalizing claims of a masculinist signifying economy, but also remain self-critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms.[77]

At the same time, this sort of easy essentialism also tends to "colonize" other cultures and ethnic groups, by making all women everywhere examples of this universal oppression felt by white women in the West; in so doing, it ignores the profound racial, ethnic, and cultural differences between women of different social and historical contexts, even as it glosses over the very real socioeconomic asymmetries between white and nonwhite women in our own culture.[78]

It is more useful, Butler suggests, to follow Foucault and to regard gender and sex themselves—both "maleness" and "femaleness"—not as universal essences that exist across cultures and throughout historical periods, but rather as constructed categories. Like the complex and recently invented category of "sexuality" itself, gender is neither stable nor fixed, but imagined in different ways in different social and historical contexts.[79]

Much the same critique, I think, could be made of most of the early forms of neo-paganism that emerged in the wake of Gardner's Wiccan revival; in fact, it is still applicable to many of the pagan traditions prevalent today. Much of the early neo-pagan literature of the 1960s and 1970s was strongly heterosexual, making the binary symbolism of god-goddess, male-female, lance-grail, sun-moon the fundamental and pervasive structure of their mythological narratives and ritual practices alike. Modern sex magic calls for balanced male/female polarity and is conducted by the couple in private. As we have seen, the entire Great Rite is built around the binary logic of male and female energies, and many of its proponents, such as the Farrars, argue strongly for a fundamentally heterosexual interpretation of the Craft: "The magic of gender is the basic pattern of most coven workings, as when a man and a woman hold opposite ends of a cord in cord magic, or men and women sit alternately in a ring for linked-hand magic, or a man and a woman consecrate the wine or a working tool."[80]

At the same time, even nonheterosexual pagans continue to celebrate a universalistic and highly stereotyped model of womanhood. In virtually all of the neo-pagan literature (including most of the lesbian pagan literature) woman is the embodiment of the Goddess as the Great Mother, identified with the forces of nature, the earth, the body, sexuality, and fertility. "Bodily experience is the very essence of feminist spirituality and is . . . the locus of women's power. Female bodies are . . . the repository of special magical powers associated with the menstrual cycle. The womb is a mystical cauldron of rebirth."[81] But this universal womanhood, it is argued, has been systematically oppressed and exploited by hegemonic patriarchal power. In Starhawk's words, "We are all the Goddess in her multitude of forms: an Aphrodite, an Artemis, Maiden, a Mother, a Crone. We are all Persephone dragged into the underworld by the authorities of patriarchy."[82] This neo-pagan narrative really epitomizes and exaggerates the sort of naive essentialism that Butler finds problematic in much feminist discourse.

However, it is not only intellectuals like Butler who find these sexual binaries to be troubling and problematic; on the contrary, many neo-pagans have recently expressed similar concerns about the simple essentialism and fixed binaries that are so fundamental to the Craft. For example, shortly after entering the Wiccan Church of Canada, lesbian witch Lynne Landstreet realized that "this concept of polarity was something that was going to give me headaches." She was particularly struck by the pervasive heterosexual symbolism in the rites, as in the blessing of the wine: "as the athame is to the male, so the chalice is to the female. . . . For there is no greater power in all the world than that of a man and a woman joined in the bonds of love."[83] Another witch, Nexy Jo, makes the astute observation that the Wiccan movement assigns quite old-fashioned stereotyped gender roles to men and women, linking the former to leadership, power, and strength and the latter to biology and fertility; women are associated with menstrual bleeding, pregnancy, childbirth, while men are associated with hunters, warriors, satyrs, divine kings, slain gods, and the hero. In sum, "women's mysteries involve biological function, where men's mysteries involve behavior and social/gender roles."[84]

Ironically, it would seem that the neo-pagan quest for liberation from patriarchy and sexual oppression often reinforces many of the same binary structures that inform the patriarchal system: women are from the moon, men are from the sun; women are tied to the earth, the body, reproduction, and child-bearing. In so doing, the neo-pagan discourse not only reifies a universal, transhistorical ideal of "Woman," but it also makes it difficult to break free of these stereotyped, binary images of masculinity and femininity. It is not surprising, therefore, that many within the neo-pagan communities have recently begun to search for alternative gender models, beyond the static image of the primordial Mother Goddess and the binary symbolism of the Great Rite.

CONCLUSION: WITCHCRAFT AND SEXUAL LIBERATION BEYOND RADICAL FEMINISM

> If we see that root of desire as the Goddess incarnate, as the source of power-from-within . . . then we can ask: how do I create a society that furthers my sexuality? How can I live my politics erotically? . . . Such politics are dangerous. They are extremely threatening to patriarchal society, because they threaten the roots of hierarchical power relationships.
>
> That is why the movements for lesbian and gay liberation are threatening.
>
> STARHAWK, *Dreaming the Dark*

In many ways, Gardner's revival of neo-paganism has become a powerful new religious movement with far more impact and lasting influence than even Crowley's sex magic(k). For Gardner was able to wed his pagan revival much more skillfully with a larger social and sexual vision, one perhaps better adapted to the blossoming sexual revolutions of the 1960s than was Crowley's rebellion against Victorian Christian prudery. Perhaps most importantly, Gardner's pagan revival dovetailed especially well with the radical feminist movements in England and America that came almost immediately in its wake.

But like much of the radical feminist literature from the same period, the early neo-pagan movement also reveals certain points of contradiction and ambivalence. Gardner himself seems to have been more interested in nudism and women's bodies than actual social reform. And much of his ambivalence continued in the pagan revival of the 1960s and 1970s, which in many ways accepts the male-female binary structure upon which patriarchy is founded. In other words, it only inverts—rather than actually subverting or transforming—the hierarchy of men over women, and fails to imagine other possible gender roles for women apart from "Maidens, Mothers and Crones" or embodiments of Earth, nature, and fertility.

In more recent years, however, a number of alternative forms of paganism have begun to pop up, many of them directly challenging the heterosexual version of Wicca and offering their own original variations. Thus we can now find a variety of homosexual pagan pathways through movements like the Radical Faeries, texts like *Gay Witchcraft: Empowering the Tribe* or online articles like "The Queer Craft" by Storm Faerywolf.[15] Yet interestingly enough, while most of these gay and lesbian witches reject heterosexual binarisms, they often retain many of the same gender stereotypes for male and female roles. Lesbian witches for the most part continue to invoke the Great Goddess—associated with the earth, nature, the moon, menstrual flow, and the like—as a universal symbol of female empowerment; meanwhile, gay male witches still invoke Pan and the gods of the hunt and war as unifying symbols of "the tribe." Thus, one of the more prominent gay male pagan organizations, the "Minoan Brotherhood," makes an interesting but strikingly unradical symbolic shift by centering its worship around "the Great Mother of all living things" and her "Divine Son, the Starry One," substituting a mother-son binary for the husband-wife binary.[16]

However, a few of the more experimental movements have attempted to explode the male-female stereotypes altogether by invoking a wide range of unconventional and transgender deities. Thus, in a recent article in *newWitch* magazine, Sheela Adrian looks to a wide array of "supernatural gender-benders" from around the world, including not just the obvious choice of the Greek Hermaphroditus, but also Coyote from Native American traditions, Galatur and Kurgarra from Sumerian myth, Julunggul from Australia, Lan Ts'au Ho, one of the eight Chinese immortals, and Loki from the Norse tradition. As Adrian concludes, no matter what your sexual orientation, there is surely a deity out there somewhere in the world's mythology for you to appropriate and make part of your own personal spirituality:

> No matter what your body looks like or how complicated a pretzel you make of your identity, you can rest assured: some deity somewhere has done the

> same kind of thing and some other has done things even weirder. Whether you manifest a typical or alternative opinion, you can find spiritual fulfillment. Indeed, exploring issues of sex and gender can actually enhance your spirituality. So let go of any lingering doubts you might have and let your true colors show![87]

Here we have perhaps the epitome of religious diversity in an age of globalization and transnational capitalism: anyone of any sexual preference can find his or her personal deity drawn freely from the world's sacred traditions, past or present, East or West. And yet, as wondrous and liberating as this sounds, one cannot help but ask: Have all the world's religious traditions now become so many items in a vast global supermarket, in which deities, rituals, and myths can be freely appropriated, mixed-and-matched and redefined according to the particular sexual orientations of spiritual consumers? Or is something meaningful perhaps lost in the transaction? This is the recurring question that we have encountered throughout this book—the ambivalent tension between the ideal of sexual liberation and its tendency to become co-opted and commercialized. It is the tension between a laudable goal of female empowerment and gender equality and the popular commercial version that we find in glossy magazines like *newWitch*, with its regular columns by "Sexy Witch" and "Pop Goddess," or its feature articles like "Invoking Buffy: Discovering the Magic of Pop Icons."[88]

As we will see in more detail in chapter 8, this tension has become even more acute in our own generation, as neo-paganism has arguably become one of the most popular, and so also widely commercialized, forms of (post-) modern spirituality available today.

7 The Age of Satan

Satanic Sex and the Black Mass, from Fantasy to Reality

> Our religion . . . is the only one, I think, in complete accordance with human nature. It is based on indulgence. Instead of commanding our members to repress their natural urges, we teach that they should follow them. This includes physical lusts, the desire for revenge, the drive for material possessions.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with John Godwin, *Occult America*

> In Anton's church all the Satanic fantasies became realities
>
> BLANCHE BARTON, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*

If the 1950s witnessed a new flowering of sensual spirituality with the rise of neo-paganism, witchcraft, and Goddess worship, the late 1960s would give birth to even more radical and transgressive forms of sexual magic. As its founder, Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–97), observed, it is no accident that the modern Church of Satan was created in 1966—at the height of the countercultural revolution, amid a generation eager to transgress the boundaries of American society through drugs, music, and sexual experience.[1] And if the neo-pagans and Wiccans had "rediscovered" ancient traditions by creatively reimagining and reinventing them, so too LaVey and his followers would reimagine Satan and the Black Mass for a new generation.

As we saw in the first chapter, one of the darkest undercurrents running through the Western religious imagination, from pre-Christian times down to Aleister Crowley, was the nightmare of sexual license and the perversion of sacred ritual. This was a nightmare that had been foreshadowed in the attacks on the Gnostics, the heresies of the Cathars and Free Spirits, and the Templars, but it achieved perhaps its final form in the early modern period in the fantasy of the Black Mass—a complete inversion of the Holy Eucharist, usually involving some form of sexual perversion. While the Black Mass was primarily a matter of fantasy throughout the last five hundred years, LaVey's Church of Satan was among the first groups to make this fantasy a reality. Just as Crowley took the old narrative of perverse Gnostic rituals and created a "Gnostic Mass," and just as Gardner took the old narrative of witches' orgies and created a "Great Rite," so too, the modern

Church of Satan would take the old narrative of orgiastic Black Masses and create a new ritual that at once enacts and ridicules these persistent fantasies of sex and magic.

Dressed in his absurd devil costume, complete with pointy horns and cape, LaVey represents a kind of parodic turn within the history of sexual magic, which recognizes the contrived nature of its own ritual performance: "We step on modern sacred cows. A modern-day form of the Black Mass might consist of such things as urinating on marijuana, crushing an LSD sugar cube underfoot, hanging a picture of Timothy Leary or a famous Indian guru upside down."[2] At the same time, however, LaVey would also be accused by many critics of selling out, commercializing the Church of Satan and transforming transgression itself into a kind of marketable commodity. Other disillusioned followers would also be deeply troubled by the powerful elements of misogyny, sexism, racism, and fascist tendencies within the church. But again, LaVey seemed at once aware and yet unbothered by this, and in fact he seemed quite happy to fleece any poor dupes who were stupid enough to take things too seriously: "P. T. Barnum said, 'A sucker is born every minute.' With the population explosion, by now there must be five."[3]

In this chapter, I will argue that the Church of Satan needs to be understood in the context of 1960s American culture amid the social trends variously called the countercultural revolution, the sexual revolution, and so forth. LaVey and his church, I will suggest, reflect many of the central tensions in American society in the late 1960s and 1970s. As Jeffrey Weeks observes, sexuality became a central source of tension, anxiety, and debate throughout the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting larger social fears about rapid social change and the increasing freedom of a new generation: "What was clearly taking place was a displacement of the anxieties aroused by the nature of the social changes, especially expressed in the growing autonomous styles of the various youth cultures, onto the terrain of sexuality, where hidden fears and social anxieties could most easily be stirred."[4] LaVey at once reflected and exploited these larger fears about sexuality, yet he did so in complex and contradictory ways. At the same time that he declared the dawn of a new Satanic age of sexual and personal freedom, LaVey also held some extremely conservative social and political views; at the same time that he proclaimed the autonomy of the individual ego and its desires, he was also by his own admission a misogynist with attitudes toward women that many would find quite offensive. Like most of the figures we have examined so far, LaVey identified sexual liberation with an ideal of liberation on a much larger scale; however, in his case, this liberation was not a social and political revolution, but instead the liberation of the individual ego from all inhibition, guilt, or shame. As such, LaVey reflects much of the darker and less admirable side of the sexual revolution—a revolution that was still, in many ways, primarily "for men"[5] and less concerned with social justice than with individual gratification.

After a brief historical overview of the Black Mass in the Western imagination, I will examine LaVey's early life and his own version of the rite. I will then place LaVey's movement in the context of American culture of the late 1960s and 1970s, where it embodied some of the most intense anxieties and contradictions surrounding sexuality during these decades. Finally, I will discuss some of the criticisms brought against LaVey for his apparent sexism and reactionary politics, which would in turn give birth to a whole new series of Satanic offshoots. Although LaVey was often criticized for his offensive sexual and political views, he clearly helped revive the old nightmare of the Black Mass for a new generation of sexual magicians.

THE BLACK MASS: FROM MEDIEVAL FANTASY TO MODERN REALITY

> [T]he practitioners of the Black Art in modern times [are] almost exclusively people of great wealth.
> DENNIS WHEATLEY, *The Devil Rides Out*

> Any ceremony considered a black mass must effectively shock and outrage, as this seems to be the measure of its success.
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*

The highly theatrical Black Mass performed by Anton LaVey and his followers drew upon a long, rich history of Christian nightmares of ritual inversion and demonic perversion. Indeed, it is in many ways the culmination of the long history or "recurring nightmare" of religious heresy and sexual subversion that we briefly retraced in chapter 1. As Jeffrey Burton Russell observes, however, the actual performance of the Black Mass does not in fact have a very ancient history; on the contrary, it is "for the most part a literary invention of the nineteenth-century occultists."[6] Despite its powerful role in the modern popular imagination, there is only scant evidence of any actual Black Mass being celebrated prior to the seventeenth century, and it achieves its now-famous form only in nineteenth-century novels.

Nonetheless, the modern Black Mass does draw on many older tropes in the Western religious imagination and is closely tied to the same fears of secret ritual, child sacrifice, and sexual perversion that surrounded both the early Christians and the early Christian heresies. Thus, one of the more infamous heresies of Middle Ages, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, was charged with performing such sacrilege as sexual intercourse on top of an altar during the act of consecration: "They . . . maintained that if a man and a woman had sexual intercourse on an altar at the same time as the consecration of the host, both acts would have the same worth."[7] Likewise, we saw that the Knights Templar were accused of both desecrating the Mass and various sexual transgressions, and finally the classic prototype of the Black Mass were the fantasies of the witches' Sabbath, with its invocation of the devil and free copulation with demons. As Stuart Clark observes, the witches' Sabbath was often described by the church demonologists and inquisitors as a complete inversion of the Mass, now dedicated to Satan as the "ape of God": "the devil [is] enthroned like God . . . together with altars, demons, 'saints,' music, hand-bells, crucifixes (with the arms lopped off), prelates, bishops, and priests . . . candles, aspersions (with the devil's urine). . . . After elevating the black host . . . the priest threw it down and ground it into pieces. One of the most important witches confided . . . that she believe witchcraft to be a better religion than the one it simulated because its masses were more splendid."[8]

There is also evidence that the Eucharist itself had long been used for "magical" (and black magical) purposes, such as " to cause disease or to obtain love, or even to procure abortion or death."[9] The Council of Toledo in 1694, for example, condemned priests who celebrated a Mass for the dead naming not a dead man but a living victim whom it was intended to kill.[10] Even Catherine de' Medici (1519–1589), Queen of France, was alleged to have performed a Black Mass involving human sacrifice on behalf of her sick son, Philip.[11] Eventually, we find written texts with instructions for black magical uses of the Mass; probably the most notorious of these is the sixteenth- or seventeenth-century *Grimoire of Honorius,* attributed to Pope Honorius III, which contains various instructions for uses of the Mass (together with the sacrifice of a cock and other offerings), in order to summon spirits and make them do his bidding.[12]

The association of Satanism, the Mass, and sexual perversion was solidified in the popular imagination by several infamous figures of the late medieval and early modern period. The first was the French baron Gilles de Rais (1404–1440), a great military chief who fought at the side of Joan of Arc and became one of the wealthiest men in Europe. In 1440, however, de Rais was arrested and executed for a long series of horrifying crimes and would be remembered as one of the worst serial killers in history and a medieval predecessor of modern Satanic abuse narratives. Not only had he sexually abused and murdered dozens—perhaps hundreds—of children, but the baron was also alleged to have employed sorcerers and alchemists in the hopes of generating new wealth when his extravagant lifestyle threatened to bankrupt him.[13] According to some accounts, however, de Rais only once made use of the remains of a victim in a magical rite, and even then he was so seized by guilt that he gave the corpse a Christian burial.

The second, no less infamous story of sexual magic and the black arts is said to have occurred in the late seventeenth century at the court of Louis XIV. In a scandal of epic proportions, which involved allegations of abortions, child sacrifice, and poisoning among members of Louis' court, black magic and political intrigue became deeply entangled. Louis' mistress, Madame de Montespan, was apparently worried that the king's interest in her was waning and therefore turned to supernatural means. According to the charges leveled against her, she had first used various "powders" given to her by a fortune-teller called La Voison in order to inspire the king's affections. When this failed, she was said to have turned to still more extreme measures; in 1673, she was alleged to have participated in a Black Mass performed with the naked body of a woman as the altar, upon which communion was celebrated from a chalice containing wine mixed with the blood of an infant (three or four babies had been sacrificed, according to her accuser). During the ceremony, de Montespan recited the following incantation:

> Astaroth, Asmody, Prince of Friendship, I conjure you to accept the sacrifice of this infant I present to you for the things which I ask, which are that the friendship of the King . . . should continue towards me, that I should be honored by the princes and princesses of the court, that nothing I demand from the King should be denied me.[14]

The priest believed to be most deeply involved in the celebration of these Masses was Abbé Guiborg, who was described in particularly sinister terms by his interrogator, Nicolas de la Reynie: "He has cut the throats and sacrificed uncounted numbers of children on his infernal altar. . . . It is no ordinary man who thinks it a natural thing to sacrifice infants by slitting their throats and to say the Mass upon the bodies of naked women."[15]

Finally, de Montespan would also be implicated in an alleged attempt to poison the king himself, undertaken by one of her maid's, Mlle des Oeillets (the courier of the love powders). Des Oeillets had briefly received the sexual attention of the king and had borne a child by him, but she was soon cast aside and forgotten. Out of brokenhearted revenge, she was said to have enlisted the services of Guiborg in order to create a poison. According to Guiborg's confession,

> Clad in alb and stole I officiated at a conjuration . . . in the presence of La des Oeillets who wanted to put a death charm upon the king and was accompanied by a man who supplied the rubric of the conjuration. For the rite it was required to have the sperm of both sexes, but since des Oeillets was having her monthly period menstrual blood was used instead; the man with her went to the space between bed rail and the wall . . . and masturbated himself. I directed this semen into the Chalice.[16]

The combined wine, semen, and menstrual blood was then mixed with powdered bat blood and flour and taken away to be used as a deadly poison on the king. Although de Montespan was never proved guilty of involvement in this affair, these scandalous events did serve to destroy any remains of the king's love for her and permanently damaged her reputation.

Perhaps the most explicit connection between the Mass and sexual perversion, however, appears in the writings of the infamous pornographic novelist Marquis de Sade (1740–1814). Although he did not associate them with magic or Satanism, de Sade wrote several accounts of the Catholic Mass performed in explicit sexual settings. The most elaborate descriptions appear in his novels *Justine* and *Juliette.* The latter describes a Mass celebrated by Pope Pius himself in St. Peter's Cathedral, during which the sacred Host is defiled in all manner of sexual and scatological ways by His Holiness and Juliette: "The Host once consecrated, the acolyte brought it up to the stage and respectfully deposited it upon the tip of the papal prick, the very next moment the bugger claps it into my bum. . . . Sodomized by the Pope, the body of Jesus Christ nested in one's ass . . . what a rare delight."[17] As the Marquis wrote in his *Lusts of the Libertines,* the Mass provides one of the best occasions for a variety of deliciously shocking transgressions:

> [The libertine] fucks a whore throughout a Mass being held in his private chapel, and ejaculates furiously at the moment the host is raised aloft. . . .
>
> He fucks whores on the holy altar while Mass is proclaimed, their naked arses spread apart on the sacred stone. . . .
>
> He farts and has a whore fart into the holy chalice, they both piss into it, they both shit in it, and finally he splurts his spunk into the mess.
>
> He makes a small boy shit onto the plate of the Eucharist, then devours the turd while the boy sucks his cock. . . .
>
> He takes holy communion then, while the wafer is still in his mouth, has four whores shit upon it. . . .

> He rubs the whore's clitoris with the Host until she drenches it with cunt cream, then shoves it up her cunt and fucks her, ejaculating over it in turn.[18]

By the nineteenth century, these narratives of Black Masses and sexual perversion had entered fully into the European popular imagination. Arguably the most famous literary rendition of the Black Mass is J. K. Huysmans's classic decadent novel *Là bas* ("Down There"). Increasingly interested in the occult arts, witchcraft, and Satanism, Huysmans allegedly sought out a series of guides to lead him to the Black Mass. There is a great deal of controversy as to whether Huysmans ever did in fact witness a Black Mass or whether he simply fabricated the event and embellished the already long history of Western fantasies of satanic ritual. There are some firsthand reports that he was taken in person to performances of the Black Mass, but there are others, such as French occultist Joséphin Péladan, who charged that the book revealed an "absolute and definitive ignorance of the laws of satanism," and Papus (Gérard Encausse), who suggested that the author pilfered the whole thing from Larousse's *Encyclopedia.*[19]

According to Huysmans's account, however, he had in fact witnessed a Black Mass, at which he had seen a man later identified as Abbé Van Haecke. In Van Haecke, Huysmans believed he had discovered the "greatest satanist of all time, the Gilles de Rais of the nineteenth century."[20] In 1889, Huysmans encountered yet another controversial figure associated with illicit sex and black magic: the defrocked priest Abbé Boullan. Together with his companion, Sister Adèle Chevalier, Boullan had founded a religious community at Bellevue near Paris called the Society of the Reparation of Souls. Many have suspected that this may have been less a genuine religious order than a cloak for darker sexual and violent activities, ranging from fornication to ritual murder and sacrilege: "whenever a nun fell sick or complained of being tormented by the devil, Boullan would apply remedies compounded of consecrated hosts and faecal matter; and on 8 December 1860, at the end of his Mass, he sacrificed upon the altar a child which Adèle Chevalier had born him at the moment of Consecration."[21] In any case, Boullan was considered by many to be a truly evil character. As Stanislas de Guaita described him in his *Temple de Satan,* Boullan was a "pontiff of infamy, a base idol of the mystical Sodom, a magician of the worst type, a wretched criminal, an evil sorcerer, and the founder of an infamous sect."[22] Huysmans heard about Boullan in 1889 and sought him out in order to learn more of the occult. While Boullan denied being a Satanist, he did claim to be an authority on incubi and succubi and gave Huysmans more than enough information to write his novel.[23]

Boullan and van Haecke both appear as fictionalized characters in *La bas*. The former appears in the character of the intelligent and learned priest, Dr. Johannes, while the latter appears as the sinister, fallen priest, Canon Docre, who officiates over the Black Mass that is at the center of the novel. The hero of the story and Huysmans's alter ego is Durtal, who happens to be researching the life of Gilles de Rais, and as part of his probing into the darkest side of human nature, seeks out a real performance of the Black Mass. Huysmans's account of the Mass is truly fantastic, weaving together all the old fantasies of blasphemy, sexual license, and transgression that run throughout the Western religious imagination. The Mass takes place in the remains of an old Ursuline convent, where the crucifix has been replaced with a grotesque image of Christ, whose grieving face has been transformed into "a bestial one twisted into a mean laugh. He was naked, and where the loincloth should have been, there was virile member projecting from a bush of horsehair."[24] Instead of a pure young child, the choir boy assisting in the Mass is a "fairy," while the priest, Canon Docre, wears a scarlet bonnet with two buffalo horns. In the course of his Mass, Docre derides Jesus as the "Artisan of Hoaxes, Bandit of Homage," who has caused the "Chicanery of thy . . . commercial representatives, thy Popes, to answer by dilatory excuses and evasive promises." Meanwhile, he praises Satan as the "King of the Disinherited, Son who art to overthrow the inexorable father," and celebrates his various sins:

> Master of slanders, Dispenser of the benefits of crime, Administrator of sumptuous sins and great vices, Satan, thee we adore, reasonable God, just God! Superadmirable legate of false trances . . . thou savest the honour of families by aborting wombs impregnated in the forgetfulness of the good orgasm . . . and thine obstetric spares the still-born children the anguish of maturity, the contamination of original sin. . . .
>
> Hope of Virility, Anguish of the Empty Womb, thou dost not demand the bootless offering of chaste loins . . . thou alone receivest the carnal supplications and petitions of poor and avaricious families. Thou determinist the mother to sell her daughter, to give her son; thou aidest sterile and reprobate loves; Guardian of strident Neuroses, Leaden Tower of Hysteria, bloody Vase of Rape![25]

The whole scene culminates in a bizarre chaos of blasphemy and disgust, as the congregation—mostly prostitutes and degenerate old women—writhe madly on the floor while Docre chews up and spits out the host to be further desecrated:

> In a solemn but jerky voice he said "Hoc est enim corpus meum," then instead of kneeling . . . before the precious Body, he faced the congregation and

> appeared tumified, haggard, dripping with sweat. He staggered between the two choir boys who, raising the chausible, displayed his naked belly. Docre made a few passes and the host sailed, tainted and soiled, over the steps. . . . A whirlwind of hysteria shook the room. . . . Women rushed upon the Eucharist and, groveling in front of the altar, clawed from the bread humid particles and divine ordure. . . . Docre . . . frothing with rage, was chewing up sacramental wafers, taking them out of his mouth, wiping himself with them and distributing them to the women, who ground them underfoot, howling, or fell over each other struggling to get hold of them and violate them.
>
> The place was simply a madhouse, a monstrous pandemonium of prostitutes and maniacs.[26]

Although this account is probably the product of Huysmans's own vivid imagination and the long history of dark fantasies of the Christian world turned upside down, it would become one of the most widely read accounts of the Black Mass and a major influence on most later attempts to recreate it. Moreover, Huysmans was apparently so disturbed by his own research into the dark world of the occult that he became convinced of the existence of supernatural evil and eventually returned to the church; as he put it, "the devil drew me toward God."[27]

In the twentieth century, these fantasies of the inverted Mass would be still further elaborated in the wake of the Great Beast, Aleister Crowley. As we saw above, Crowley seemed to delight in his own reputation as the wickedest man in the world, notorious for his sexual transgressions and ritual performances. But his image became all the more infamous through various popular accounts of his activities in the media and in fiction, such as the works of the popular British author Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977). A caricature of Crowley appears in several of his novels, where circles of wealthy, intelligent, devil worshippers permeate British society (often in league with Nazis or Communists) and meet to hold occult rituals. His 1953 novel, *To the Devil—a Daughter,* uses Crowley as the model for its main villain, Ipsissimus Mocata, the head of a group of British Satanists. And his 1934 novel, *The Devil Rides Out,* provides a detailed account of a "sabbat" held in the English countryside by a group of wealthy, upper-class Satanists who arrive in a fleet of expensive automobiles; for, as Wheatley observes, "the practitioners of the Black Art in modern times were almost exclusively people of great wealth."[28] The ceremony is conducted by the devil himself, appearing as goat-headed creature who leads his worshippers in a ritual that enacts many of the old tropes: desecration of the crucifix, cannibalism, and so forth.

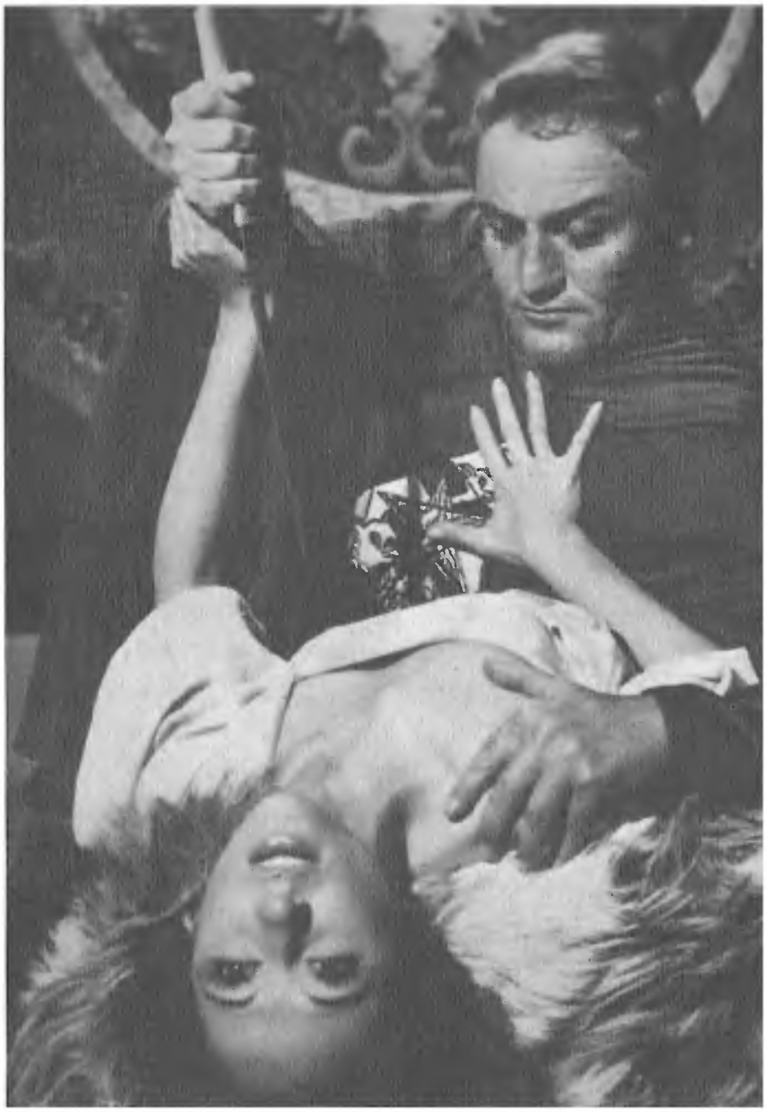


Figure 17. Mocata, in *The Devil Rides Out.* Directed by Terence Fisher; Hammer Films, 1968.

Just a few decades later, Anton Szandor LaVey would borrow fro exaggerate this trope of the Black Mass. His Satanic rites would be a the culmination of this long history of fantasy surrounding the Blacl and a kind of satirical play upon their frightening power in the m imagination.

THE DAWN OF THE SATANIC AGE: ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY AND THE CHURCH OF SATAN

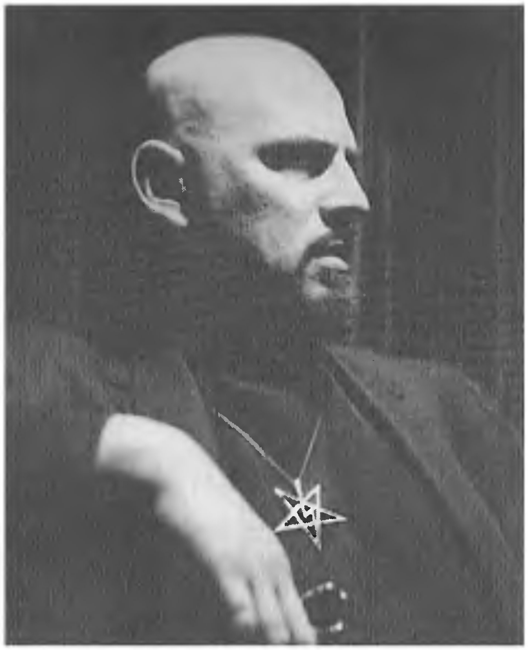
> The devil does not exist. It is a false name invented by the Black Brothers to imply a unity in their ignorant muddle of dispersions. A devil who had unity would be a God.
>
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *Magic in Theory and Practice*

> The Satanic Age started in 1966. That's when God was proclaimed dead, the Sexual Freedom League came into prominence and the hippies developed the free sex culture.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, quoted in Arthur Lyons, *The Second Coming*

Portrayed as a former circus performer, lion trainer, police photographer, and the man who starred as the devil in Roman Polanski's film *Rosemary's Baby*, Anton Szandor LaVey would seem to be a character almost as colorful as the Great Beast, Aleister Crowley himself. Indeed, he seems in many ways a kind of American version of Crowley for a new age of sex and violence. As Blanche Barton described him, he was a figure of truly "Luciferian" pride and contradictions: "As a reflection of the three-dimensional villain [Satan], Anton LaVey is a complex and in many ways frighteningly deceptive man. Supremely ego-driven, he integrates characteristics most of us would think irreconcilable. Upon first meeting LaVey, many are disarmed by his wit, talent and an almost self-deprecating manner. Those who have the opportunity to be around him for any length of time eventually see a seething, brutal side to LaVey."[29] Barton's biography of LaVey, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, is today the best-known account of LaVey's enigmatic life. It has, however, been seriously challenged by Lawrence Wright[30] and other critics who have found little evidence for many of the claims made in Barton's lively account (which was denounced as "a catalogue of lies" and "self-serving bullshit" by LaVey's own daughter Zeena).[31]

The now legendary narrative of LaVey's life as told by Barton goes briefly as follows: LaVey was born in Chicago in 1930, of French, Alsatian Russian, and Romanian descent, though he also claimed to possess gypsy blood and to have learned about vampires from his grandmother Luba Kolton. Brought up in San Francisco, LaVey was the proverbial boy who ran off to join the circus, leaving his family and school at age sixteen to play calliope at an amusement park; later he would join the Clyde Beatty Circus as a cage boy and later as an assistant lion tamer. LaVey also worked for some time as a calliope player and organist, performing for both the carnival dancers and for the Christian tent revivals—an experience which, he claims, proved to him the hypocrisy of Christianity and the deeper reality of carnal desire:

Figure 18. Anton Szandor LaVey with his personal magical symbol. From Blanche Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1996).



> On Saturday night I would see men lusting after half-naked girls dancing at the carnival and on Sunday morning when I was playing the organ for tent-show evangelists at the other end of the carnival lot I would see these same men sitting in the pews with their wives and children, asking God to forgive them and purge them of their carnal desires. . . . I knew then that the Christian Church thrives on hypocrisy and that man's carnal nature will out![32]

Another formative experience for LaVey was his time working as a criminal photographer for the San Francisco Police Department, where he regularly saw examples of horrible cruelty and bloodshed. If his organist days proved to him the reality of carnal desire and the hypocrisy of religion, his time as a police photographer proved to him the violence of human nature and the nonexistence of God: "There is nobody up there who gives a shit. Man is the only god. Man must be taught to answer to himself and other men for his actions."[33]

During the 1950s, LaVey also developed an interest in the occult and parapsychology. After studying the works of Crowley (which he ordered from Jack Parsons himself), he began to investigate reports of ghosts, UFOs, and other bizarre phenomena for the police department. Eventually, he would begin holding classes on esoteric subjects at his notorious Black House, a sprawling old Victorian manor which he had painted entirely black. In addition to his popular Friday night lectures on the occult, he began to hold "witches' workshops," where he would impart formulas to women willing to use them for their own self-glorification and power.[34] This gradually evolved into a more ritual sort of gathering, involving a parodic performance of the Black Mass, complete with desecrated hosts, inverted crosses, prayers recited backwards, and the like. Finally, choosing the dramatic occasion of *Walpurgisnacht,* 1966, LaVey shaved his head and proclaimed the formation of the Church of Satan. Thus 1966 was declared Year One, Anno Satanus: the first year of age of Satan.[35] LaVey's newly crafted image as the high priest of Satan was also clearly a parodic one, almost absurdly so. In addition to his Halloween-costume outfit with horns and cape, LaVey sported a pointed goatee that, as many have observed, made him look strikingly like the villain Ming the Merciless from the old Flash Gordon comic books.

Regardless of the truth of Barton's biography, LaVey's reputation as the high priest of Satan and the black pope for a new age of sensual religion spread rapidly. In 1967, a year after the founding of the church, Ira Levin published his popular Satanic horror novel, *Rosemary's Baby;* when Roman Polanski decided to turn it into a film, LaVey seemed a natural choice to serve as a technical advisor and even to appear as the Devil in the surreal impregnation scene. Here we find the ultimate act of sexual magic, and one that Crowley and Parsons had also hoped to realize: the incarnation of Satan himself, who enters this world through sexual union. In any case, Satan had now burst into the American popular imagination in full force and would soon appear throughout a whole new flood of popular literature on black magic and the occult.

Like Crowley before him, LaVey proudly declared all existing religious and moral systems deceased, bankrupt, hypocritical, and irrelevant. His own new creed is based on the fundamental acceptance that all religions are human creations, that all moral codes are relative and arbitrary, and that we may as well create a religion and morality that we can enjoy:

> I question all things. As I stand before the festering and varnished faces of your haughtiest moral dogmas, I write thereon in letters of blazing scorn: Lo and behold! All this fraud. . . .
>
> No creed must be accepted upon authority of a "divine" nature. . . . No moral dogma must be taken for granted—no standard of measure deified. There is nothing inherently sacred about moral codes. Like the wooden idols of long ago, they are the work of human hands, and what man has made, man can destroy.[36]

The basic philosophy behind LaVey's new church is neither particularly original nor particularly complicated. It is perhaps best described as a kind of radical materialism and hedonistic individualism, which celebrates the human body, ego, and sensual pleasure—or in Barton's world, "a system based on rational self-interest, sensual indulgence, and the constructive use of alienation."[37] Much of LaVey's writing—such as *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Witch*—bear strong resemblance to the works of Crowley, Friedrich Nietzsche's ideal of the will to power, and existentialism, with a dash of Ayn Rand thrown in for good measure. But LaVey also marketed his philosophy for a new generation of sexual freedom and individualism in the America of the 1960s and 1970s. The main point for LaVey is that Satanism does *not* mean worship of some actual anti-deity named Satan who is the opposite of some imagined God; rather, it is the rejection of all gods altogether and the worship of one's own individual self. Here Satan—meaning literally "the adversary"—is merely the symbol of the individual human ego. For "Religions and ideologies will come and go . . . but man's basic nature will remain the same. Yet only through understanding himself will he be able to embrace and cherish the demon within him."[38] What he created was, in effect, a response to the "turn on, tune in, drop out" idealism of the 1960s counterculture, a religion in which a person can "turn on" to the pleasures around him without "dropping out" of society.[39]

Like Crowley and Nietzsche, LaVey felt a particular disgust for Christianity, which he saw as a religion of weakness, repression, guilt, and hatred of the body: "The contemptible Judaeo-Christian religion is the root of our present misery, for it has taught us to repress our true, selfish feelings."[40] Yet LaVey was no less harsh in his criticism of the various forms of neo-paganism and witchcraft that had become so popular in the wake of Gardner's Wiccan revival; all of that nature worship and dancing around in naked circles is merely so much "namby-pamby ethicalism" mingled with "sanctimonious fraud" and "esoteric gibberish."[41]

LaVey's new religion was intended—much like Crowley's Abbey of Thelema—to shock conservative mainstream society out of its complacency and moral double standards.[42] What mankind needs now, he suggests, is a religion that worships the individual human being as a carnal beast with desires that need to be fulfilled.

> 1. Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence!
> 2. Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams! . . .
> 5. Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek! . . .
> 7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," has become the most vicious animal of all!
> 8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification!

9. Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept it in business all these years![43]

As such, LaVey claims, Satanism is the most honest and the most powerful religion in the world, for it is simply "a religion of the self," the reverence and worship of the individual ego, which openly acknowledges that it is, like all religions, not a divine revelation but a human invention. "Satanism is the only religion which serves to encourage and enhance one's individual preferences, so long as there is admission of those needs. . . . It's a celebration of individuality without hypocrisy."[44] Here LaVey seems to have created the ideal religion for the "Me-Generation," which followed shortly after the founding of his church in the 1970s.

At the same time, LaVey was also clearly marketing his church to a much larger, much less elite or esoteric audience than his occult predecessors like Crowley or Theodor Reuss. Thus his popular paperbacks are all sold widely in major bookstores, while the Church of Satan Web site advertises the movement with slogans like "Satan Wants You." As filmmaker Kenneth Anger observed, LaVey's Satanic philosophy was far less disciplined than even Crowley's sexual magic and was instead meant to be accessible to a wider public:

> Crowley would have been too much hard work for Anton. Anton may have been a little jealous of Crowley, he may have been a lot jealous. . . . There are aspects of Crowley that require a great deal of self-discipline. Anton's take on Satanism was to make it accessible for everyone—it's not a difficult esoteric philosophy.[45]

We might even say that LaVey represents the far more liberal American and Californian laid-back attitude toward magic and sexuality, which rejects once and for all even the lingering remnants of Victorian prudery still left in Crowley's magic.

The New Black Mass: Satanism and Sexual Liberation in the 1960s

> The reason there has always been such a fascination for witchcraft and sorcery is because it has been consistently considered taboo . . . nothing is so fascinating as that which is not meant to be seen.
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, quoted in Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*

> O Infernal Majesty, condemn him to the Pit, evermore to suffer in perpetual anguish. Bring Thy wrath upon him, O Prince of Darkness, and rend him that may know the extent of Thy anger. Call forth Thy legions that they may witness what we do in Thy name. Send forth thy messengers to proclaim this deed, and send the Christian minions staggering to their doom.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, "Le Messe Noir," in *The Satanic Rituals*

Despite his rejection of most forms of neo-paganism, LaVey would also incorporate elaborate ritual and ceremony into his church. For LaVey, however, the power of ritual lies in its combination of "psychodrama and psychic direction." On the one hand, ritual creates a profound aesthetic or psychological effect. After all, "man needs ceremony, and ritual, fantasy and enchantment [the] wonder and fantasy which religion, in the past, has provided."[46] Or, as Gavin Baddeley nicely puts it, "Drama and melodrama are very meaningful. Bombast has its place in Satanism—in some ways, Satanism takes up where Catholicism leaves off."[47] Yet LaVey also acknowledges that this aesthetic and psychological drama generates a powerful energy that can be shaped and directed for magical ends.[48] And the most notorious of LaVey's ritual performances was his parodic re-creation of the Black Mass.

Although he would later downplay the performance of the Black Mass as outdated and ineffective, LaVey did celebrate several Masses in the early church, which helped in no small part to spread his reputation as the new Black Pope. "The rituals for the first year were largely intended as cathartic blasphemes against Christianity. The elements were consistent with the reports of Satanic worship from the famous writings of diabolists, such as the description in . . . *Là Bas.*"[49] One of these Masses was recorded in 1968 and soon became the standard format for performances of the Black Mass throughout America and Europe. Performed upon the body of a naked woman as the altar, and involving the use of urine and explicit desecrations of the sacred Host, LaVey's Black Mass *(Le Messe Noir)* was at once an extreme performance and a ridiculous parody of the long nightmare of sexo-Eucharistic perversions that have so long haunted the Christian imagination. It is not entirely clear what LaVey's precise sources for *Le Messe Noir* were; he alludes to a nineteenth-century group in France called *Societé des Luciferiens,* along with the works of other nineteenth-century French authors like Huysmans and Baudelaire and a certain Legué (probably Gabriel Legué, rather than Georges as he cites him):[50]

> The *Black Mass* which follows is the version performed by the *Societé des Luciferiens* in late nineteenth and early twentieth century France. Obviously

Figure 19. The Black Pope leads a nubile acolyte toward earthly indulgence. From Blanche Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1996).

taken from prior *Messes Noir,* it also derives from the texts of the *Holy Bible,* the *Missale Romanum,* the work of Charles Baudelaire and Charles Marie George Huysmans, and the records of Georges Legué. It is the most consistently Satanic version this author has encountered.[51]

In the early days of the Church of Satan, LaVey held performances of the Black Mass and other rites each Friday night at his Black House, which attracted not just the lunatic fringe of the Bay Area but a number of affluent individuals and celebrities (including, as we'll see below, Jayne Mansfield). The ritual was performed with almost absurdly demonic drama. Opening with booming chords from an organ, LaVey appeared wearing a horned cap and a long cape surrounded by black-robed worshippers; on the wall was the Sigil of Baphomet allegedly used by the Knights Templar in their perverse rites, and beneath it was the naked female body draped across the stone mantle over the fireplace. Extending a sword to the four directions, LaVey invoked Satan, Lucifer, Belial, and Leviathan and then passed around a chalice filled not with wine or blood but with some other beverage of choice (e.g., bourbon).

The text of LaVey's *Le Messe Noir* is a mixture of a Latin parody of the Catholic Mass and French and English prayers to Satan. Several paragraphs of the text are lifted word for word from Huysmans's Black Mass in *Là bas,* including the following Satanic rants:

> Thou, thou whom, in my quality of Priest, I force, whether thou wilt or no, to descend into this host, to incarnate thyself into this bread, Jesus, artisan of hoaxes, bandit of homages, robber of affection, hear! Since the day when thou didst issue from the complaisant bowels of a virgin, thou hast failed all thy engagements, belied all thy promises. Centuries have wept, awaiting thee, fugitive god, mute god! Thou wast to redeem man, and thou has not. Thou wast to appear in thy glory, and thou sleepest. Go, lie, say to the wretch who appeals to thee,
>
> "Hope, be patient, suffer; the hospital of souls will receive thee; the angels will assist thee; Heaven opens to thee." Imposter! Thou knowest well that the angels, disgusted at thy inertia, abandon thee![52]

LaVey's ritual also contains various instructions for the desecration of the ritual and the sacred Host by means of bodily fluids and sacrilegious acts involving urine, genitalia, and desecration. For example, the nun "lifts her habit and urinates into the font," after which an aspergeant is dipped into the urine and shaken in four directions. The wafer, which is to be made of turnip or coarse black bread, is placed "between the exposed breasts of the altar," then touched to the "vaginal area," and finally trampled by the priest, deacon, and subdeacon.[53]

Clearly, much of this ritual is aimed at a kind of explicit, exaggerated, even ridiculous form of transgression that goes even further in the direction of parodic inversion than Crowley's own extreme ritual transgressions. LaVey himself would more or less acknowledge as much, suggesting that the early Church of Satan had in a sense to use such extreme displays of Christian inversion in order to awaken the American public and make itself known to the world: "Any ceremony considered a black mass must effectively shock and outrage, as this seems to be the measure of its success."[54] Once the original shock had been made, however, these theatrical performances of the Black Mass were no longer really necessary:

> After that original blast, there was no need for the ongoing public spectacle and outrage of an inverted Catholic Mass anymore. Christianity was becoming weaker every day. That was just beating a dead horse. There were plenty of other sacred cows to attack, and that's what keeps Satanism vital and thriving.[55]

Nonetheless, despite the church's statements to the contrary, the LaVeyian style Black Mass with the naked female altar has continued to be a thriving and theatrical aspect of Satanic worship throughout the world to this day. It seems to have been taken in some interesting new directions as well. Thus, one Satanic witch describes a New Year celebration in which she served not just as the altar but the dinner table for an elaborate Satanic smorgasbord:

> In the last Satanic New Year we had a huge party and it was really great. I was there at the private party in the evening on the table. We had dinner on me! . . . They put me on the table naked, they put all sorts of salads all over my body, and they ate off me with a spoon. It was absolutely fantastic.[56]

Yet to what degree such rituals are "fantastically" liberating and to what degree they only continue a deeper form of exploitation and misogyny remains open to question.

While LaVey's Black Mass involves primarily symbolic references to sexuality (the naked altar, touching the breasts and genitals, etc.), he does also recommend various other rites of a more explicitly sexual nature. *The Satanic Rituals* outlines three main types of ritual: sex rituals for the conjuration of lust, destructive rituals for the expression of anger or hatred, and compassionate rituals for helping oneself or others. The first of these might be considered the Satanic version of sex magic. Here the practitioner is to pray to the "great spawn of the abyss" to "send forth that messenger of voluptuous delights and let these obscene vistas of my dark desires take form in future deeds and doings." Then, in the case of a male, he should recite a prayer in rather Crowleyian prose that exalts his throbbing "rod" and its "venom" in the name of Pan:

> My rod is athrust! The penetrating force of my venom shall shatter the sanctity of that mind which is barren of lust; and as the seed falleth, so shall its vapours spread within that reeling brain benumbing it to helplessness according to my will! In the name of the great god Pan, may my secret thoughts be marshaled into the movements of the flesh of that which I desire!

The female, conversely, is to pray in the name of the whore of Babylon, celebrating her nectar-dripping loins and their "pollen":

> My loins are aflame! The dripping of the nectar from my eager cleft shall act as pollen to the slumbering brain, and the mind that feels not lust shall on a sudden reel with crazed impulse. . . . In the names of the great harlot of Babylon, and of Lilith and of Hecate, may my lust be fulfilled![57]

Here the sexuality and gender of both male and female are exaggerated in ways that go even further than the "woman is from the moon, man is from the sun" of the Wiccans. Now both male and female become hypereroticized lust-dripping creatures, the thrusting rod and the flaming loins aching for sexual satisfaction.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION: SEXUAL LIBERATION, SATAN-STYLE

> Freud's "pleasure principle" should be known to be the highest motivator for any religion. . . .
>
> Never underestimate the sexual corollaries to fetishism/religion.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, "The World's Most Powerful Religion"

> Unless we free ourselves from the ridiculous sexual standards of our present society, including the so-called sexual revolution, the neuroses caused by those stifling regulations will still persist.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*

LaVey's new church was in many ways a simultaneous expression of and reaction against many of the changing attitudes toward sex and gender in the 1960s. Many of his works, such as *The Satanic Witch*, are at once classic expressions of the rhetoric of sexual liberation and also quite blatant statements of male chauvinism. Above all, his performance of the Black Mass—performed upon the living altar of a naked female body—is a kind of weird parodic experiment in both sexual revolution and ritual misogyny. In fact, LaVey himself acknowledges that the very symbolism and magical power of the Black Mass rests upon a fundamental male-female/dominant-receptive gender polarity that is directly opposed to modern forms of feminism:

> Feminism negates and inverts the natural male/female interchange. There's a magnetic interaction between men and women that can be exploited for magical results. . . . It's been described as yin/yang, active/passive. . . . In Satanic ceremonies, it's the interplay between the dominant Priest and the receptive female altar. But feminists in their supposed quest for equality have tossed the baby out with the bathwater.[58]

As Steven Seidman suggests, the years between 1960 and 1980 in the United States witnessed a profound new "legitimation of the erotic aspects of sex" and a new valuation of sexual pleasure as a good in and of itself, even apart from love and marriage: "by the 1960s the pleasurable and expressive qualities of sex were appealed to as a sufficient justification of sex. Discourses . . . appeared that constructed sex as a domain of pleasure and self-expression requiring no higher purpose. . . . Eros was released from the culture of romance that gave birth to it."[59] Yet this new drive toward liberation was not limited to sexual freedom; rather, it was part of a larger countercultural phenomenon that also involved freedom in music, dress, hair style, drug use, and political resistance: "the 1960s saw the birth of a counter-culture, less apolitical than the working class culture, more challenging . . . of bourgeois hegemony. Music, clothes, style became the hallmark, the crack in the painwork of the traditional society that seemed to be vanishing forever. . . . [V]iolence, drugs and sex, three major preoccupations of the 1960s and 70s blended symbolically in the image of youth in revolt."[60] At the same time, this period witnessed a new expansion of sexuality into popular culture as a whole, particularly through advertising, the media, and the increasing commodification of sex through pornography:

> By the 1960s there was undoubtedly an increasing eroticization of many aspects of social life, from the increasing sexual explicitness of advertising, where sex became an obvious inducement to ever-extending and often useless consumption, to the growing squalor and exploitativeness of pornography in major cities.[61]

Yet, as other, more critical authors have observed, this revolutionary call for the unleashing of eros was often largely in the service of male interests. As Sheila Jeffreys argues, it was typically men rather than women who benefited from this new sexual freedom, which allowed them to enjoy a wide array of libidinal pleasures often without accountability, all in the name of "sexual liberation." "The sexual revolution completed the sexualisation of women. Both married and unmarried women were expected to become experts in sexually servicing men, and to get over their own tastes and interests."[62] In sum, "the sex-rev failed because, Freudian or not, it failed to ask what women want."[63] Instead of genuine liberation or equality, what we find today is a remarkable proliferation of commodified forms of sexuality, pornography, and prostitution, which, as Dennis Altman observes, are largely "means of satisfying male 'desire' through the services, in both the corporeal and fantasy realms, of women."[64]

The Law of the Forbidden: Sexual Fetishism and Fantasy

> [P]sychiatry had no room for the encouragement of fantasy or personal fetish. If anything it was about negating or subverting them. That's where I found my grey area—keeping and treasuring your fetishes, dreams and fantasies rather than subverting or expelling them.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*

LaVey's new church was in many ways the epitome of this contradictory fusion of sexual liberation and male domination that ran throughout the "sexual revolution" as a whole. His writings repeatedly emphasize the need for full indulgence of one's sexual appetites, as well as a proud recognition of all one's most peculiar sexual proclivities. "Satanism *does* advocate free love, but only in the true sense of the word. Free love, in the Satanic concept, means exactly that— . . . freedom to indulge your sexual desires with as many others as you feel is necessary to satisfy your particular needs."[65] Thus, for example, pornography is by no means rejected but openly embraced as a celebration of our carnal nature: "Porn is inherently Satanic as an art form: it has no other role beside self-indulgence in its most basic form; it glorifies man's carnal nature, blending the most beautiful aspects of the human animal with the most debased."[66] Like Crowley before him, LaVey warned that sexual desires that are *not* indulged will simply turn into dangerous obsessions, neuroses, or worse: "If a person has no proper release for his desires, they rapidly build up and become compulsions."[67] And like Crowley, P. B. Randolph, Reuss, and others, LaVey taught methods of sex magic, or the release and channeling of sexual energy for magical aims; but his was, as he put it, "Sex magic without sanctimony."[68]

In certain respects, LaVey's concern with the liberation of sexuality went much further than most of the countercultural discourse of the 1960s. LaVey was not simply interested in liberating healthy, happy, pleasurable sex for a more open society; rather, he was particularly interested in exploring sexual areas that were considered most taboo: sexual fetishes and deviant desires of all varieties. We are all, in his opinion, "fetishists," with some form of deep, dark, deviant desire or other: "EVERY MAN IS A FETISHIST. YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO *DISCOVER* HIS FETISH."[69] Indeed, LaVey suggests that the sexual liberations of the 1960s had very quickly become boring and routine, simply because of the endless, easy access to free love. Exploring one's most idiosyncratic fetishes, conversely, makes sex dangerous, defiant, exciting again:

> Fetishism is . . . an effort to make sex exciting again. The experiments in "free love" of the 1960s and 1970s may have made promiscuity fashionable . . .

> but they also demonstrated that . . . anything in endless, monotonous supply could become dull. . . . Christianity preaches that sex is merely a procreative act, devoid of pleasure. . . . Sexual activity wherein procreation is avoided . . . is therefore one of the most pleasurable blasphemies. Truly Satanic sex is where the individual indulges their own true personal proclivities.[70]

Like Crowley and Georges Bataille, LaVey was fascinated by the principle of transgression, the explicit violation of social and sexual taboos, or what he liked to call "the law of the forbidden." As De Sade and Bataille had also observed, the prohibition only tends to make the forbidden act all the more tantalizing, the act of violating the taboo all the more exhilarating. When asked by interviewer Gavin Baddeley "How much of the appeal of the occult, and Satanism in particular, derives from its secret, hidden character?" he replied:

> There's a big link with the "law of the forbidden," a concept pioneered by the photographer William Mortensen concerning the primal appeal of sex, sentiment and wonder. These are the basic human interests from which our compulsions and fetishes are derived. Like the fairground where people will pay to go into the freak tent to avert their eyes.[71]

Thus the law of the forbidden applies equally to our fascination with Satanism and the occult as well as to our fascination with sexual transgression and deviant desires. Just as "The reason there has always been a fascination for witchcraft and sorcery is because it has consistently been considered taboo," so too "sheer nudity in itself is usually not nearly as stimulating as a glimpse of the forbidden," for in both cases "NOTHING IS AS FASCINATING AS THAT WHICH IS NOT MEANT TO BE SEEN!"[72] In LaVey's opinion, we are all deviant and "nasty" at heart; indeed, our sexual fetishes and our fascination with the forbidden are what make us mature human animals: "all men are nasty little boys at heart. When the first sexual feelings and subsequent experimentation occurred in a man's life, he was acting in the capacity of a nasty little boy in ninety-nine percent of all cases . . . when a boy becomes a man, it is accompanied by lewd thoughts!"[73] In sum, whereas Randolph, Reuss, and other sexual magicians had identified sex as the innermost essence of the human being and the greatest source of magic, LaVey identifies *sexual fetishism and deviance* as the innermost core of human animality.

Thus, when performing sexual rituals, LaVey advises that the Satanist be constantly mindful of the transgressive, deviant, subversive nature of the act: "While performing your ritual, remain as aware as possible that you are doing something naughty, forbidden, possibly even nasty. . . . This is the time to turn unfounded guilts and inhibitions into an *advantage!*"[74] For it is in large part this sense of the forbidden or transgressive that gives the act its magical power.

The Satanic Witch: An Anti-Feminist Religion?

> I'm a confirmed misogynist, but only because I'm such a pushover for feminine women.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, quoted in Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*

> Women can exploit their differences to gain more power. . . . Advanced, Satanically-oriented women can choose their own lifestyle rather than have it thrust upon them. They can participate in all kinds of exercises, rituals if you will, to break down the brainwashing feminism has done on contemporary young women. Sadomasochistic revelries, shape-changing deviltry, discipline games—women are looking for more of that sort of thing in their private lives because it's the ideal therapy.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Witch*

Perhaps the most complex—and, to many, disturbing—aspect of LaVey's Satanic philosophy is his attitude toward women. As in most other aspects of his views, LaVey is proudly offensive and politically incorrect in his views on women. He does in fact argue for a certain kind of sexual liberation and empowerment of women, a recognition of the real power that women wield over men and can use to their advantage. As he puts it, "The witch has always been a rebel," who, with her subtle violations of taboos, "defies sacred cows the other women kneel before."[75] LaVey himself had a powerful attraction to and respect for particular kinds of women—most often the curvaceous, voluptuous, "truly female" types, such as Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield, both of whom had brief relationships with the Black Pope. After Mansfield's death in a car crash, LaVey praised her for her "hedonism and pure, selfish pursuits" in her "dedication to the ideals of Satan."[76] In Satanism, Mansfield "had found a philosophy through which she could be a businesswoman, an intellectual, a mother and a sexpot all at once."[77]

But at the same time, LaVey was also a staunch opponent of feminism, women's rights movements, and anything that weakened the distinctions between the sexes. As his daughter Zeena, observes, LaVey released his *Satanic Witch* in the same time period—and in many ways in response to—the Equal Rights Amendment and feminist activists like Gloria Steinem. Satanism was, in effect, a rejection of this "emasculation" of men and "defeminizing" of women:

> It was in this period of gender confusion and bra-burning bravado that the

> *Satanic Witch* was first published. . . . A diabolical textbook reinforcing traditional sex roles and "sexist" attitudes was viciously attacked in that shrilly militant, androgynous atmosphere.[78]

In LaVey's opinion, this whole period of time was "completely ass backwards. Men were becoming emasculated, women were getting uglier, and adults in general were turning into one indeterminate sex in the name of liberation," which blurred the fundamental distinction between man and woman, creating a synthetic composite that represented the worst of both genders.[79]

In contrast to the "defeminizing" and "androgynizing" trends in modern women's movements, LaVey advocates what he calls a "true liberation for women brave enough to risk jealous ridicule from their 'sisters.'" Rather than an androgynous, desexualized being, the "truly liberated female" is the one who knows how to accentuate and make full use of her femininity, with all its curves and caprices; she "knows both how to use and enjoy men" and can "profit by her womanliness by manipulating the men she holds in contempt, while enjoying them." This would, LaVey suggests, herald a new and more authentic kind of feminism based on the recognition of the true nature of the female body as an object of carnal desire. "The woman who grasps and fully understands the mastery of the world inherent in this book's Satanic teachings will usher in a true feminism, the liberation of the demonic in every woman."[80] In contrast to the "flaccid, lackluster attitude" of the Wiccan and neo-pagan witches, the Satanic witches embody true "pride, identity and power" by accepting and affirming their distinctly feminine sexuality.[81]

Probably the best known artist for the Church of Satan was "Coop," much of whose work featured extremely voluptuous demon vixens sporting little apart from horns and pitchforks to adorn their large bottoms and bursting bosoms. As Coop argued in an interview with Gavin Baddeley, this is really what men want, and have always wanted from the dawn of time, in keeping with our own uniquely "male" and "female" animal natures:

> Women should look like women, and men should look like men. There's a reason that we have evolved into this state, and I can't see why we should throw that out of the window after it's worked for so many thousands of years. I think the image of the voluptuous woman is firmly planted in the darkest, least evolved parts of our brains. If you look at stone-age fetish figurines—like the famous Venus of Willendorf—they were just basically little statues of fat chicks that cavemen jerked off to.[82]

The ability to manipulate feminine sexuality in order to dominate men is the heart of sexual magic for the true Satanic witch. The wise witch can arouse and then draw upon the sexual energy in the men whom she captivates in order to use that energy for her own devices:

> Because their sexual energy is potential magical energy and nature intended that they be attracted to you, *men* are your best source of witch power. . . . by your own sexual self-consciousness, you can draw this power from the men who need only to be placed within your magnetic field—produce an accelerated charge of sexual self-consciousness.[83]

Thus LaVey gives detailed instructions to the Satanic witch for her sexual-magical rituals designed to allure and seduce men. She might, for example, go out in public, highly made-up and wearing nothing but a coat over her naked body; she should then flaunt herself before every man she meets, imagining that she is totally naked. She should then go home, remove the coat, and stare at herself naked in the mirror, imagining herself from a man's perspective, feeling "completely exposed" as she "shamelessly flaunted" herself, imagine handsome men grabbing her, aroused and excited at the outrageous display of the sensual naked body:

> Allow yourself to build as high a peak of sexual excitement as possible, masturbating yourself to a climax, attempting to feel as the man would as he watched the girl (you) perform such an act in public. As you are overcome by your sensual responses, close your eyes, fall to the floor, thrash about in wild abandon—or do whatever will contribute to the most intense orgasm. . . . As you are coming down from your climax, say to yourself, "I am a witch; I have power over men! I am a witch; I have power over men!"[84]

In short, the witch is not only to *become* a sexual object and focus of the male gaze; she is even to *internalize* that male gaze, subject herself to it in her imagination, and thereby use it to her own magical advantage.

Although LaVey claims that rituals like these are liberating and empowering for his female followers, there is little doubt that most feminists and anyone sympathetic to women's rights today would find his teachings deeply disturbing. He had no qualms about saying things that would make anyone with politically correct conscience cringe, such as: "all women are exhibitionists to a certain extent. The thrill that any healthy woman obtains when she knows she is exciting a desirable man is the most natural thing in the world."[85] But LaVey himself would most likely admit as much. He was an avowed "misogynist" who loathed the defeminization of women that he saw occurring during the 1960s, and he wanted nothing more than to "smash the current androgyny," to return to a world where "men look like men" (hard, cold, intellectual) and "women look like women" (soft, warm, emotional). As he put it in his usual uncompromising way,

> I'm a confirmed misogynist, but only because I'm such a pushover for feminine women. A misogynist's disdain is based on jealousy. Seeing the power that aggressively passive women wield through their feminine wiles, he wishes he had a bit of it himself, secretly admires it, and seeks to capture it before it captures him. . . . We misogynists need wanton, sleazy, yielding, soft women to augment our masculinity. I consider a well-adjusted heterosexual misogynist a bulwark against the most devastating form of defeminization."

Not surprisingly, the publication of LaVey's *Satanic Witch* was met with mixed results. While some praised it as a visionary "breakthrough in understanding human motivation," many feminists responded with livid outrage, "public book burnings, pickets at stores."[87] LaVey, however, rather seemed to enjoy the controversy he'd created.

HEDONISM, INDIVIDUALISM, AND GREED: THE ULTIMATE "MODERN" RELIGION?

> [T]his is a very selfish religion. We believe in greed, we believe in selfishness. We believe in all of the lustful thoughts that motivate men because that is man's natural feeling.
>
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview in the film, "Satanis: The Devil's Mass"

> The philosophy of Satanism I follow is a modern invention, relevant to the modern age. We look at it from a fairly scientific, balanced point of view.
>
> DAVID AUSTEN, High Priest of the Temple of Set, quoted in Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*

As a religion that affirms the basic principles of egotism, sexual pleasure, and greed, a religion that values the principles of elitism and hierarchy, LaVey's church could be said to be in many ways an ideal religion for American capitalist society in the late twentieth century. If Crowley represents, in a sense, the "exhaustion of modernity" in Europe and England in the mid twentieth century, then LaVey might be said to represent the *celebration of a new form of modernity* in America at the close of the twentieth century. After all, the basic ideals of modernism may have led to war, holocaust, and disaster in Europe, but the United States emerged from the war as the most powerful, arrogant, and rapidly growing force in global politics. LaVey's philosophy would seem in many ways to reflect a new confidence in the Crowleyian principles of individualism, radical freedom, amorality, and hedonism, which fit rather well with the basic principles of American capitalism. And

LaVey's church would itself become quite successful commercially, rapidly growing into one of the most successful new religions on the American occult scene of the 1960s and 1970s.

Not all of LaVey's followers would agree with the direction his church was taking, however. Increasingly in the 1970s and 1980s, LaVey would face not just outrage from mainstream Christians and irate feminists, but also dissent from various church members who were increasingly disturbed by the seemingly fascistic and capitalistic tendencies within the movement.

Blessed Are the Strong

> Smash the crumbling cross, for Might is right.
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, "Battle Hymn of the Apocalypse,"
> from *The Satanic Bible*

As with his outspoken misogyny and sexism, LaVey had no qualms about voicing an explicitly politically incorrect social vision based on hierarchy and the dominance of the strong over the weak. A highly elitist philosophy, taking a kind of Nietzschean will to power, the cult of the individual, and Darwinian survival of the fittest ideal to their furthest extremes, Satanism is based first and foremost on the power of the strong, willful individual over the dull conformity of the cowardly masses: "LaVey's world is self-indulgent, hedonistic, elitist . . . yet also brutal, opinionated, extreme. He needs no other humans to populate it, so any who come into his immediate circle enter understanding LaVey's emotional/psychological inaccessibility and distance."[88] Thus LaVey has his own Satanic inversion of the Sermon on the Mount, which celebrates not the weak and poor but the strong and greedy:

> Blessed are the strong, for they shall possess the earth—Cursed are the weak, for they shall inherit the yoke!
>
> Blessed are the powerful, for they shall be reverenced among men—Cursed are the feeble, for they shall be blotted out! . . .
>
> Blessed are the iron-handed, for the unfit shall flee before them—Cursed are the poor in spirit, for they shall be spat upon.[89]

As LaVey's daughter Zeena comments, Satanic sexual practices can also be used as a form of eugenics: by learning to select the strong and dominant, while avoiding the weak and feeble, the Satanist can help to create a new breed of powerful individuals who rise above the dull herd: "*The Satanic Witch* . . . is a guide to selective breeding, a manual for eugenics—the lost science of preserving the able-bodied and able-minded while controlling the surplus population of the weak and incompetent."[90]

These elements of elitism, intolerance, and even eugenics did not always sit well with LaVey's followers. One of the most outspoken critics of the church has been Isaac Bonewits, who was a regular at LaVey's rituals as a teenager. He would later become shocked and horrified by the apparent racism, chauvinism, and elitism within the movement, describing Satanists as largely a bunch of "fascists, jerks and psychopaths."[91] He was particularly disturbed when he began to see elements of white supremacy and Nazism creep into the church:

> Some were bringing authentic Ku Klux Klan robes and Nazi uniforms for the ceremonies. I was assured that the clothes were merely for "Satanic shock value" to jar people from their usual pattern of thinking. Then I would talk to the men wearing these clothes and realize they were not pretending anything. I noticed that there were no black members of the Church and began to ask why.[92]

LaVey himself espoused no particular political views. Yet his highly elitist and hierarchical Satanic philosophy is clearly in many ways compatible with certain aspects of fascism, racism, and, as I would suggest, consumer capitalism.

Churchofsatan.com: Marketing Satan, Sex, and Liberation

> Satanism as mass culture is great. . . . There's a great advantage in mainstreaming, and I'd be a hypocrite to dislike it.
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with Gavin Baddeley, quoted in *Lucifer Rising*

LaVey's emphasis on the central values of egotism, hedonism, and personal satisfaction does seem to fit well with the larger economics patterns of consumer capitalism in late-twentieth-century America. Greed and acquisitiveness are, like all other vices, basic aspects of the human being and should therefore be affirmed and celebrated. Just as he rejects the idea of abstention in sexual matters, so too he rejects any pretence of poverty in the name of religion: "LaVey had no illusions about vows of poverty as a means of gaining spiritual redemption. For him magic was essentially about power and wealth was a type of power. LaVey reserved the right to channel funds accruing to the church of Satan in any way, for any purpose he saw fit."[93] Eventually, in 1975, LaVey even began marketing the degrees of initiation within the church. Higher degrees could now be obtained by contributions in cash, real estate, or valuable objects of art: "priesthoods in the Church of Satan were available to those who demonstrated their success in the wider world—such demonstrations to include gifts of cash or valuable objects."[94]

Again, however, not all of LaVey's followers were happy with what they saw as blatant commercialism creeping into the church. One of the most notable critics of the church was Michael Aquino, a former high-ranking officer in the U.S. military intelligence, with service in Vietnam and a doctorate in political science to his name, who joined the church in 1969. Like Bonewits, Aquino began to feel that the church was beginning to attract the wrong sort of crowd—"a carnival of freaks," "sexually inadequate, social misfits, intellectual poseurs." The leadership had meanwhile fragmented into "petty squabbles over title, ranks and privileges" amid an ironic fraternity of individualists.[95] However, Aquino was even more disturbed by LaVey's policy of selling degrees, which he saw as the same sort of hypocrisy that Satanists had attacked in the mainstream Christian church: "If there had been a single unifying factor that had brought us to Satanism, it was the church's stand against hypocrisy. So when we learned of this policy, our reaction to it was that LaVey was betraying his office, betraying everything that he had worked for for so many years."[96] In 1975, Aquino broke from the church and founded his own new order, the Temple of Set. Indeed, he claimed that Satan had revealed himself in his true and original form, the ancient Egyptian god Set, and had named Aquino as LaVey's replacement (as well as the successor to Aleister Crowley). In sum, "Just like the Pope in the sixteenth century, the Black Pope faced the challenge of attempted reform."[97]

The Church of Satan, I would suggest, is thus a striking illustration of the larger "cultural contradictions" surrounding sexuality, transgression, and liberation in the America of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, it shows very clearly the ways in which the very promise of sexual transgression and sociopolitical liberation themselves can become co-opted, commodified, and transformed into yet another profitable supermarket of American culture. As Altman suggests, this is a recurring theme throughout American society during these decades, as the "attempt to link sexuality with the political" gave way to a culture "where sexuality is more commonly linked with contemporary capitalism, and we increasingly think of ourselves as consumers rather than citizens."[98] As we will see in the following chapter, both the hope for liberation and the tendency toward commodification would become even more obvious in the closing decades of the twentieth century amid the strange new logic of late capitalism.

CONCLUSION: THE DEVIL IS WINNING

> Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept
> it in business all these years!
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*

> From a Satanic perspective, there's room for optimism. The Devil is winning.
>
> GAVIN BADDELEY, *Lucifer Rising*

If Crowley represented the darker side of the late Victorian era, with his love of transgression and violation of sexual taboos, then LaVey and his church show us the dark side of the 1960s and the sexual revolution. At the same time that he embodied many of the counterculture's ideals of sexual freedom and revolt against mainstream values, he also represented a striking reaction against the cultural revolution, a rejection of many "liberatory" phenomena such as feminism, equal rights, and anything smacking of socialism. As Bonewits and others observed, LaVey's church would often appear more politically conservative, even fascistic, than liberating. As LaVey himself argued, Satanism and the Black Mass have always been about the inversion or transgression of mainstream cultural values; thus, a modern Black Mass would have to reject or invert popular values such as the 1960s counterculture and liberalism itself:

> A black mass today would consist of blaspheming of such "sacred" topics as Eastern mysticism, psychiatry, the psychedelic movement, ultra-liberalism, etc. Patriotism would be championed, drugs and their gurus defiled, acultural militants would be deified.[99]

In spite of, or perhaps *because of,* his politically incorrect philosophy, LaVey's church has continued to flourish even after his death, attracting a variety of high-profile members, such as shock-rock artist Marilyn Manson among others. As Gavin Baddeley suggests, the devil has not gone out of favor with the end of the sexual revolution, but in many ways he seems stronger than ever in a new era of individualism, sexual freedom, and the relentless search for sensual pleasure:

> Satanists will continue to play with "spiritual nitroglycerine." . . . In embracing perennial Christian taboos . . . we intend to prevent present-day idiocies from dragging the next millennium into another miserable Dark Age. If a New Satanic Age is born, it will be born from the ideas of curiosity, independence and pleasure. From a Satanic perspective, there's room for optimism. The Devil is winning.[100]

At least in contemporary American consumer and corporate culture, it would seem that the principles of elitism, egotism, and greed and the logic of consumer capitalism are winning as well.

8 Sexual Chaos

Chaos Magic, Cybersex, and Religion for a Postmodern Age

> The "Self," will pleasure in all things. There is only one sense—the sexual. There is only one desire—procreation. I am the cause—thou the effect. I am all that I conceive. . . . "I multiply I" is creation: The sexual infinity. There is no end to the details of my extreme likeness. The more chaotic the more complete am I.
>
> AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE, *The Focus of Life*

> Postmodern (or pagan) would be the condition of the literatures and arts that have no . . . regulating ideal, yet in which value is regularly measured on the stock of experimentation. Or, to put it more dramatically, in which it is measured by the distortion that is inflicted upon the materials, the forms and the structures of sensibility and thought.
>
> JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD and JEAN-LOUP THÉBAUD, *Just Gaming*

The practice of sexual magic, as we have seen throughout this book, is intimately tied to a profound desire for liberation, transgression, and radical freedom on all levels—sexual, social, religious, and political alike. The violation of sexual codes, in other words, is a kind of master key for the violation of codes on other levels, from economics to spirituality to political revolution. It is not surprising, therefore, that the trajectory of sexual magic in our own generation has given birth to a wide range of more radical, anarchistic, and spiritually libertarian movements such as the Discordian Society, Chaos Magic, and the infinite new varieties of cybermagic now wildly proliferating on the Internet. As we see in the case of chaos magicians like Peter J. Carroll, the practice of sexual magic is no longer merely an attempt to break free of all established social institutions or constructions of gender, but a kind of metaphysical anarchy aimed at deconstructing our basic assumptions about human identity and existence itself. And this desire for absolute freedom would seem to be characteristic of our own late capitalist consumer society itself at the turn of the millennium. As Michael Mason observes, "Our current sexual positives are not just activity, but liberation, emancipation, freedom; not just hedonism, but disinhibition; not just tolerance, but hostility to taboos and censorship."[1]

This quest for absolute freedom had already appeared in works of Aleister Crowley, with his Law of Thelema and his urge toward radical sexual and social transgression. But it would be taken to even further extremes by some of Crowley's successors such as Austin Osman Spare. For Spare, there is no law but the freedom of self-love and pleasure, a freedom that demands that one shatter the limits not just of sexuality and society but of consciousness itself. Finally, with the rise of Chaos Magic in the late twentieth century, this urge toward liberation has, in a sense, turned upon itself, with the continuous deconstruction of all dogmas and ideologies, including the premises of magic itself. In sum, if the late nineteenth century witnessed a kind of "sexual anarchy,"[2] with a radical questioning of traditional gender and sexual norms in Western society, then the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries could be said to be witnessing a kind of "sexual chaos."

It is no accident, I will argue, that the rise of various forms of Chaos Magic occurred at roughly the same time as the birth of the intellectual movements of postmodernism and deconstruction. The works of Spare and chaos magicians like Carroll share many of the same basic attitudes as postmodern theorists like Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, and others: namely, a rejection of all "metanarratives" or grand theories of reality and history; an emphasis on spontaneity, play, and shock; an attitude of irony and parody; and an aesthetic of radical eclecticism, picking and choosing freely from a wide array of philosophical views, recombining them in ever new ways, yet without becoming attached to any of them. Indeed, Lyotard himself has described postmodern thought as a kind of "paganism" that subverts the dominant institutional and cultural structures of modernism. Just as early forms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century magic were in many ways the epitome of many themes associated with "modernity," so too, many of the magical groups that emerged in the late twentieth century are striking reflections of the new forms of postmodern thought. As Adrian Ivakhiv has argued, the revival of neo-paganism in the second half of the twentieth century is in many ways a "postmodern response to the disenchanted and depersonalized worldview of modernity."[3]

It is also perhaps no accident that one of the most effective and popular media for the dissemination of new magical styles like Chaos Magic is the shifting, fluid, transient, and radically eclectic network of the World Wide Web. Indeed, the rapidly proliferating, highly syncretic, and inherently fleeting nature of the Web would seem to make it in many ways an ideal vehicle for a constantly morphing, self-deconstructing movement like Chaos Magic.

However, like much of postmodern thought, these new forms of magic also raise some troubling problems and lingering concerns. Perhaps most important is the question of whether these new forms of magic are really examples of resistance to the dominant social and economic forces today, or whether they are instead perhaps the fullest *embodiment* of certain trends in contemporary Western society? As Fredric Jameson argues, the constantly shifting, fluid, and flexible outlook of postmodernism is itself an expression of the current socioeconomic system in the West, which has been variously called postindustrial capitalism, post-Fordism, or late capitalism; indeed, it is perhaps the "cultural logic" of late capitalism. So too, I will argue, these new forms of magic, with their emphasis on constant transformation, self-deconstruction, and experimentation, could be said to reflect the "magical logic of late capitalism." Their relentless search for sexual liberation, transgression, and sensual ecstasy would seem to embody many of the transgressive, hypererotic, ecstatic forces in late capitalist culture as a whole.

EXHAUSTION AND CHAOS: FROM MODERN TO POSTMODERN SEX MAGIC

> Where does our modern world belong—to exhaustion or ascent?—Its manifoldness and unrest conditioned by the attainment of the highest level of consciousness.
>
> FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *Der Wille zur Macht*

> The time is at hand when the bankruptcy of all theories of religion, all systems of government will become apparent to us all.
>
> *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*

As we have seen throughout this book, sexual magic since the nineteenth century has by no means been opposed to the various intellectual, cultural, and economic forces associated with "modernity" in the West. On the contrary, sexual magic has in many ways embodied and epitomized some of the most central themes of modernity—above all, the ideals of individualism, the "celebration of the self," radical freedom, and progress toward a utopian social goal. From P. B. Randolph through Theodor Reuss and Aleister Crowley, these basic modernist ideals are not only expressed but often exaggerated and taken to their furthest extremes.

Already in the case of Crowley, however, we can see the signs of the *exhaustion* of modernity, a growing disillusionment and sense of the collapse of many of the central ideals of modern Western civilization. As Crowley observed, all known forms of religion, politics, and economics, from Christianity to democracy and communism, had proved "bankrupt":

> The theories of Divine Right, aristocratic superiority, the moral order of Nature are all today exploded bluffs. Even those of us who believe in supernatural sanctions for our privileges to brow beat and rob the people delude ourselves with the thought that our victims share our superstitions.[4]

Crowley's own life, moreover, would seem to embody the grandiose aspirations, tragic failings, and final exhaxustion of modernity in the mid twentieth century. Just as the modernist dream of scientific progress toward a rationally ordered utopia had collapsed with the devastation of the two world wars, so too Crowley's dream of a new aeon of liberation and a new order based on the Law of Thelema finally left him a poor, lonely old man hopelessly addicted to heroin.

In this sense, Crowley seems to have anticipated many of the trends in postmodern thought that would emerge several decades after his death. As Jürgen Habermas observes, the once boundless optimism of the modern era, with its ideal of a perfectly ordered rational society, appears to have dissolved with the events of the two World Wars: "The 20th century—with its death camps and death squads . . . its threat of nuclear annihilation and its experience of Hiroshima—has certainly shattered this optimism."[5] This is perhaps the final culmination of what Marshall Berman calls the Faustian narrative of modernity. The dream of human perfection through rapid transformation could only end in tragic disintegration and violence: "the whole long project of modernization appeared a disastrous mistake, an act of cosmic hubris. . . . The figure of Faust now appeared in a new symbolic role, as the demon who had wrenched mankind free of its unity with nature and propelled us along the road to catastrophe."[6]

It was in large part out of this sense of the disillusionment, failure, and catastrophe of the modernist project that the concept of "postmodernism" was born. Of course, the term *postmodernism* is even more contested and riddled with contradiction than the term *modernism,* and even more frequently said to be nonexistent, passé, or dead. As David Harvey suggests, postmodernism is perhaps best understood not as some radical new phenomenon or decisive break with modernism; rather it is simply the expression of certain internal tensions and crises within modernism itself (or even "modernism in its death-throes").[7]

Perhaps most commonly, postmodernism has been defined using Lyotard's formulation that it is simply the skepticism toward all metanarratives. It represents the loss of faith in any grand narrative about the history of humankind or civilization, whether it be the Christian narrative of redemption, the Enlightenment narrative of progress toward a rational society, or the scientific narrative of technological advance. All of these have now proved to be so many ideological masks for deeper political interests, often with quite sinister implications, ranging from the exploitation of the natural world to the exploitation of human beings through colonialism or totalitarianism.[8]

In place of any grand narrative about human history, the postmodern tends to celebrate the fragmented, destabilized nature of existence. As Lyotard put it, "postmodern (or pagan)" literature has no "regulating ideal" but is measured by its power of experimentation and transformation.[9] Instead of grand metanarratives or total theories, the postmodern individual tends to be radically eclectic, picking, choosing, and cobbling together his or her own pastiche of worldviews. As Paul Heelas observes in his discussion of religion and postmodernity, the postmodern believer tends to "raid the world, drawing on whatever is felt desirable: the religions (perhaps shamanism and Christianity); the religious and the non-religious (perhaps yoga and champagne) . . . hence the popularity of 'hybridity' among postmodern theorists." The guiding principle here is not "what is the Truth" but rather the pragmatic stance of *"what works for me."*[10] And instead of the ideal of order or unity, the postmodern aesthetic is that of physical intensity, shock value, and ecstatic experience: "Postmodern consumer culture is the world of sensation-gathering and sensation enhancement. The aristocracy of consumerism seeks out those who have peak experiences, the ecstatic."[11]

Ironically, the modern emphasis on the fragmentary and the ephemeral would lead not just to the dissolution of a traditional social order; it would ultimately lead to the postmodern declaration of the "death of man" as well. The modern celebration of the individual would finally collapse upon itself as the autonomous Cartesian cogito was deconstructed and replaced by a fragmented, even schizophrenic cacophony of conflicting identities. As Fredric Jameson observes, "Not even Einsteinian relativity, or the multiple subjective worlds of the modernists, is capable of giving adequate figuration to this process, which . . . makes itself felt by the so-called death of the subject, or more exactly, the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering of this last."[12] In place of the autonomous rational subject, postmodernism emphasizes the sheer intensity of momentary sensual experiences, the polymorphous play of pleasures and desires: "Postmodernism substitutes instinctual and erotic justifications for humanistic ones. . . . It announced not only the deconstruction of Man and the end of the humanist credo, but also . . . the dissolution of focused sexuality into the polymorph perversity of oral and anal pleasures."[13] In place of the modern autonomous ego, we find what Eugene Halton calls the "postmodern Faustian self," which is perhaps the final extension of the modernist narrative: "The postmodern Faustian person, driven by the irrational march of images and fantasies instead of the Grand March of history, is the logical terminus of the Faustian myth."[14]

Finally, as more critical observers like Jameson argue, postmodernism also has profound economic implications. For if modernism was closely tied to the rise of early forms of capitalism in the West, postmodernism would seem to be closely related to the new, more fluid, complex, and shifting forms of "late capitalism" that have emerged since the 1970s. Although it has been described variously as postindustrial society, consumer society, information society, this new socioeconomic formation is by no means "postcapitalist"; on the contrary, it is "a *purer* stage of capitalism than any that preceded it."[15] And postmodernism, with its emphasis on constant transformation, radical pluralism, and intense sensual experience, represents in many ways the "cultural logic of late capitalism." The postmodern loss of faith in any totalizing worldview brings with it a sense of intense fragmentation, or "heteroglossia," which mirrors the bewildering plurality of consumer society itself:

> [F]ollowing World War II a new kind of society began to emerge (variously described as postindustrial society, multinational capitalism, consumer society . . .). New types of consumption; planned obsolescence; an ever more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes; the penetration of advertising, television and the media . . . throughout society . . . these are some of the features which . . . mark a radical break with that older prewar society. . . . [T]he emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late, consumer or multinational capitalism.[16]

At the same time, conversely, the late capitalist or postmodern global economy also brings with it the progressive extension of the logic of the marketplace to virtually all aspects of culture. In the "market-like conditions of modern life," as Habermas puts it, everything tends to become a commodity which may be bought and sold, from art to politics to religion itself.[17] Now forced to compete in the commercial marketplace alongside secular businesses and industries, religion itself tends to become yet another consumer product within the supermarket of values. The religious believer, meanwhile, is free to choose from among a wide array of possible beliefs and to piece together his or her own personalized spiritual pastiche. As we surf the World Wide Web or browse the shelves of Barnes and Noble, we find that we are now able to "select from a plurality of suitably packaged bodies of knowledge in the super-market of lifestyles. . . . The tendency in modern societies is for religion to become a private leisure pursuit purchased in the market like any other consumer lifestyle."[18] Precisely because postmodern spirituality is deregulated and freed from the structures of traditional religion, it tends to become itself a "vehicle of consumption" and a source of consumer freedom and pleasure: "The products on offer are powerful experiences; the venues are spiritual Disneylands."[19]

And among the most striking embodiments of these trends in postmodern and late capitalist culture are radical new movements like Discordianism and Chaos Magic.

FROM CROWLEY TO CHAOS: AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ECSTASY

> The idea of God is the primordial sin, all religions are evil. Self-love is its own law, which may be broken with impunity, being the only energy that is not servile, serving its ever-ready purpose. Surely it is all that is left us that has no sin and is free?
>
> AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE, *The Book of Pleasure*

> On Earth my kingdom is Eternity of Desire. My wish incarnates in the belief and becomes flesh, for, I am the Living Truth. Heaven is ecstasy; my consciousness changing and acquiring association. May I have courage to take from my own superabundance. Let me forget righteousness. Free me of morals. Lead me into temptation of myself, for I am a tottering kingdom of good and evil.
>
> AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE, *Anathema of Zos*

Arguably the most original magician after Crowley was the enigmatic author and artist Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956). As we saw in chapter 4, Crowley was himself a bit ahead of his time, not only expressing the deepest cultural contradictions of his own age but foreseeing many of the controversies of our own era and even some of the most contested issues in postmodern thought. Spare, however, would take Crowley's law of the will and his Nietzschean search for a superhuman transvaluation of all values still further, while developing unique new methods of sexual magic that are still widely used today. Using sex and art as his primary tools, Spare set out to explore the subconscious mind and tap its inner depths as a source of magical power. Indeed, his elaborate hallucinogenic drawings, laden with esoteric imagery and explicit erotica, might have aptly been described as "masturbation in line."[20] Spare began his most notorious work, *The Book of Pleasure*, at age twenty and would eventually achieve underground cult status as erotic-magical diabolist and "satanic occultist."[21]

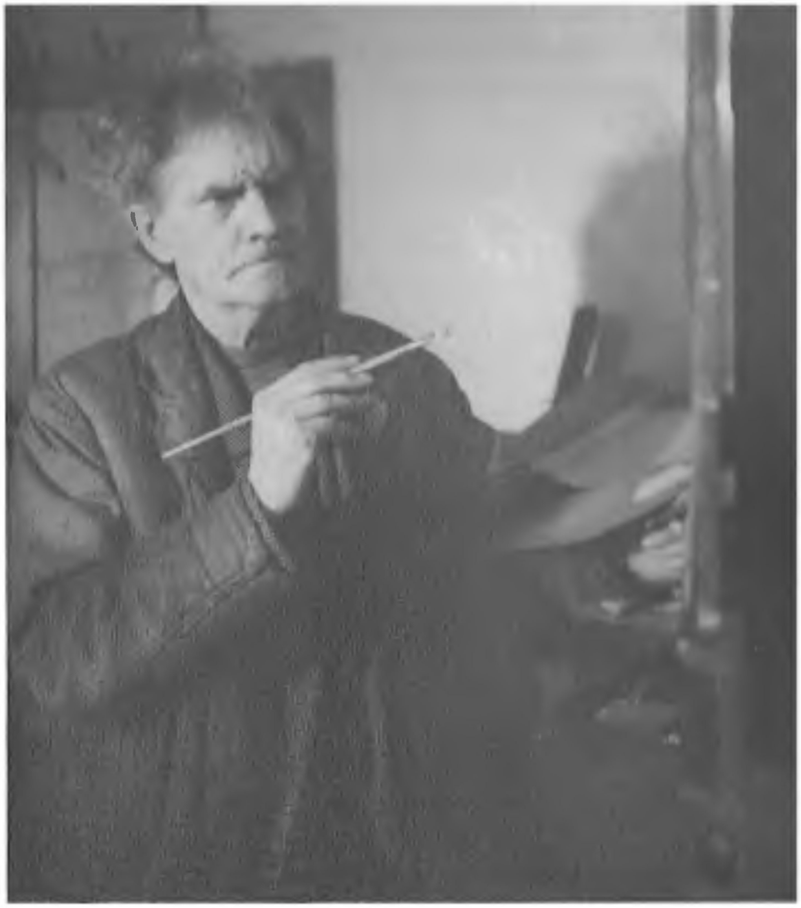


Figure 20. Austin Osman Spare. Courtesy of Getty Images.

The son of a London policeman, Spare showed a talent for art from an early age; after briefly attending art school, he became an apprentice to a stained-glass maker. Sometime during his teens, Spare met a woman known only as "Mrs. Patterson," who allegedly introduced him to occultism and magic, giving him the mystic name "Zos." Already by 1908, Spare's drawings were displayed in London galleries, revealing a striking combination of Aubrey Beardsley's form, grotesquely sexualized figures, and magical symbols. Though repulsive to some viewers, Spare's work appealed to London's avant-garde intellectuals and also attracted the attention of Aleister Crowley, who initiated Spare into his esoteric order of the *Argentium Astrum*. Spare is also alleged to have given a copy of his *Book of Pleasure* to Sigmund Freud, who described it as "one of the most significant revelations of subconscious mechanisms that had appeared in modern times."[22] Toward the end of his life, Spare became increasingly withdrawn and eccentric, inhabiting a Dickensian South London slum; though living alone, he claimed to be constantly accompanied by hosts of spiritual beings spawned by his own magical imagination. When asked whether he regretted his lonely existence, he exclaimed, "'Lonely!' . . . and with a sweep of his arm he indicated the host of unseen elementals and familiar spirits that were his constant companions."[23]

Even more boldly than the Great Beast, Spare set out to explode all moral boundaries and overstep every social, sexual, or mental taboo. In this regard, he was a direct predecessor or grandfather of more recent occult styles such as Chaos Magic, with its explicit transgression of metaphysical limits. At the core of his cosmology is "Kia," the indefinable, inconceivable primal energy, which is the source of all manifestation, but which can only be described as a state of "in-between-ness" or "Neither-neither": "Absolute Consciousness (Kia, the Self) like Infinite Space (Nuit) is without a boundary; it is the plenum-void, formless and unlocatable; to all intents and purposes—nothing at all, except that it is the sole reality."[24] "Zos," then, refers to the human mind and body, which is the vehicle for this primal, ineffable energy.

Like the unlocatable, unlimited Kia, the human self is also by nature radically free, unbounded, and blissful. Therefore, as Spare put it in his *Book of Pleasure*, the sole imperative is self-love, or recognition of and pleasure in one's own nature. This in turn demands complete freedom from all law, for the inherent nature of the self is pure freedom and bliss: "Ecstasy in satisfaction is the great purpose. Freedom from the necessity of law, realisation by the very wish, is the ultimate goal."[25] Going still further than Crowley's Law of Thelema, Spare declared his own new law, the law of pure self-pleasure: "The new law shall be the arcana of the mystic unbalanced 'Does not matter-need not be,' there is no necessitation, 'please yourself' is its creed."[26] All other laws set around this goal of pleasure are nothing but hypocrisy. "All morality is BEASTLY,"[27] for it is simply the jealousy of the cowards and sheep who are too weak to transgress all limitations:

> There is no sin for those of Heaven's delight. . . .
>
> In pleasure Heaven shall break every law before this Earth shall pass away. . . .
>
> He who is lawless is free. Necessity and time are conventional phenomena.
>
> Without hypocrisy or fear ye could do as ye wish. Whosoever, therefore, shall break the precept or live its transgression shall have relativity of Heaven. For unless your righteousness exist not, ye shall not pleasure freely and creatively.[28]
>
> Servitude to law is the hatred of Heaven. Self-love only is the eternal all pleasing, by meditation on this effulgent self which is mystic joyousness. At that

> time of bliss, he is punctual to his imagination, in that day what happiness is his! A lusty innocent, beyond sin, without hurt! Balanced by an emotion, a refraction of his ecstasy is all that he is conscious of as external. His vacuity causes double refraction, "He," the self-effulgent lightens in the Ego. Beyond law and the guest at the "Feast of the Super-sensualists." . . . Self-love preventing the mind from concentration, is identity without form, is no thought as such; law and external influences contained, do not affect."[29]

For Spare, the most hypocritical sort of morality, and the one that must be absolutely overcome, is the vain Christian asceticism that denies sensual pleasure. Sexuality can never truly be denied, for it will only turn into a repressive cesspool of repression and guilt:

> Think ye to curb the semen sentimentally? Ye deny sexuality with moral ethics, live by slaughter, pray to greater idiots. . . .
>
> For ye desire saviours useless to pleasure. . . .
>
> Honest was Sodom! your theology is a slime-pit of gibberish become ethics.[30]

Even more explicitly than Randolph or Crowley, Spare identifies sexual pleasure with the innermost nature of the Self, whose inherent nature is freedom and bliss. Sex is the pleasure of creation and dissemination, the One spreading out into many, the I becoming infinity through sexual enjoyment. How, then, could it ever be repressed or denied? "The 'Self,' will pleasure in all things. There is only one sense, the sexual. There is only one desire, procreation. . . . 'I multiply I' is creation: The sexual infinity."[31]

In addition to his ideal of radical freedom and self-love, Spare would also develop new techniques of sexual magic that would have a lasting impact on later movements like Chaos Magic. In contrast to the more elaborate initiatory grades of the OTO, Spare's methods are remarkably simple and direct, which also accounts for their widespread appeal today. The best known of his techniques is the use of magical sigils, which are essentially ideograms made up of letter combinations that embody a particular wish or desire. To create the sigil, one simply writes out the letters of one's wish, then deletes all repeated letters, and combines the remaining characters into an ideogram; this will then be the focus of one's meditation.

In order to "charge" the sigil and bring it into reality, however, one must enter an altered level of consciousness, trance, deep meditation, or ecstasy. The best means of achieving such a state, for Spare, is through sheer *exhaustion*—that is, by so exhausting and emptying the mind that it is open to the forces of the subconscious, which can then manifest the idea or desire represented in the magical sigil. Indeed, Spare's technique might be described as a kind of radical "expenditure" even more extreme than Georges

Bataille's concept of *depense*. This extreme exhaustion could be achieved in various ways, for example, through "euphoria (for example, by means of drugs), in ecstasy . . . or in a state of physical fatigue."[32] Spare also developed a technique known as the "Death Posture," a yogic-meditative posture in which one achieves a "simulation of death by the utter negation of thought, i.e., the prevention of desire from belief, and the functioning of all consciousness through the sexuality."[33]

However, among the most powerful means to achieve this state of exhaustion is sexual excess, a magical use of orgasm similar to the OTO's and Crowley's version of Tantra. Like other sexual magicians, Spare saw sexual ecstasy as the moment in which both the personal ego and the Kia (the universal spirit) were in a state of emptiness, openness, and receptivity. "At this moment, which is the moment of generation of the Great Wish, inspiration flows form the source of sex, from the primordial Goddess who exists at the heart of Matter. . . . [I]nspiration is always a void moment."[34] So powerful is such magic, fueled by the divine energy of orgasm, that "the Devil himself shall not prevent your will from materializing."[35]

Spare also describes the use of ecstatic ritual gatherings, such as saturnalia and sabbats, which involve a kind of "hyper-eroticism induced by grand scale hysteria or saturnalia." When all the senses are thus aroused through food, wine, and sexual abandon, the mind is able to magically project the object of its desire:

> [T]here is a secret meeting place and an elaborate ceremony which is an extensive hypnotic to overwhelm all psychological resistances; thus, the sense of smell, hearing and sight are seduced by incense, mantric incantation and ritual, while taste and touch are made more sensitive by the stimuli of wine and oral sexual acts. After total sexual satiation by every conceivable means, an affectivity becomes an exteriorized hallucination of the pre-determined wish which is magical in its reality.[36]

Ultimately, however, Spare is in search of a much more radical kind of liberating ecstasy, one that transcends the simple conjunction of male and female in sexual union and even shatters dualities such as man and woman altogether. The final state of "exhaustion," for Spare, would seem to be one in which the limits of thought are themselves exhausted and the self breaks free of all dualities or conceptual categories. This is the liberated pleasure of the self in its true state beyond all conception, beyond all necessity, immersed in pure ecstasy:

> Man implies Woman, I transcend these by the Hermaphrodite, this again implies a Eunuch; all these conditions I transcend by a "Neither" principle, yet

> although a "Neither" is vague, the fact of conceiving it proves its palpability, and again implies a different "Neither." But the "Neither-Neither" principle of those two is the state where the mind has passed beyond conception. . . . it implies only itself. The "I" principle has reached the "Does not matter-need not be" state, and is not related to form. Save and beyond it there is no other, therefore it alone is complete and eternal. Indestructible, it has power to destroy—therefore it alone is true freedom and existence. Through it comes immunity from all sorrow, therefore the spirit is ecstasy.[37]

Hence Spare was imagining a wholly different form of sexuality: a "New Sexuality which transcends Duality" and "cancels out to Naught."[38] This is not merely male uniting with female, nor even the Horned God uniting with the Great Goddess, but rather the self merging with the infinite Void beyond all limitations that is the ground of existence itself:

> Prepare to meet God, the omnifarious believing, thyself the living truth.
>
> Desire is the conception I and induces Thou. There is neither thou nor I nor a third person—loosing this consciousness by unity of I and Self, there would be no limit to consciousness in sexuality. Isolation in ecstasy, the final inducement, is enough.[39]

This search for radical freedom and ecstasy that negates all fixed forms would become a central tenet of many later forms of Western magic, including Discordianism and Chaos Magic.

SEXUAL CHAOS: DISCORD, CHAOS, AND "POSTMODERN" MAGIC

> In works of invocation, nothing succeeds like excess.
> PETER J. CARROLL, *Liber Null and Psychonaut*

> If you think you know what the hell is going on, you're probably full of shit.
> A card on ROBERT ANTON WILSON'S desk
> ("Who Is Robert Anton Wilson?" 2003)

At the same time that the new witchcraft covens were beginning to organize throughout England and the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, new kinds of radical magic were beginning to emerge and proliferate in explicitly *disorganized, radically individualized, and often quite "chaotic"* forms. The reasons for this more anarchic turn in modern magic are several. First, through the work of Kenneth Grant, John Symonds, and others, there was a growing revival of interest in the works of Crowley, which were increasingly available in the 1950s and 1960s, along with the works of Spare, the Golden Dawn, Israel Regardie, and others. Second, the rapid proliferation of new covens, witch cults, and magical styles had given birth to a new kind of eclecticism and syncretism, a kind of pick-and-mix attitude amid this new smorgasbord of occult possibilities. A third, more practical reason was the psychedelic revolution of the 1960s and the search for ever new, more extreme, and otherworldly states of consciousness through marijuana, hashish, psilocybe, mescaline, LSD, and other hallucinogens. But perhaps even more important forces, however, were the various new scientific, mathematical, and philosophical trends of the latter half of the twentieth century. On the scientific front, there was quantum physics and chaos theory, which radically altered traditional conceptions of matter, space, and time. And in philosophy and aesthetics, there was the explicitly iconoclastic and irreverent new trend known as postmodernism, which would have an increasing impact on both elite and popular culture throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

One of the most interesting results of this complex confluence of new magical and cultural forces was the Discordian Society. Founded by Malaclypse the Younger and Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst (also known as Greg Hill and Kery Thornley) at a California bowling alley in 1958, the Discordian Society set out to break down the barrier between religion and humor, spirituality and satire. Describing itself as " both an elaborate joke disguised as a religion, and a religion disguised as an elaborate joke," Discordianism fundamentally rejects the idea of a single Truth, Reality, or correct interpretation of "Reality." As such, it is "not in concept different from postmodernism."[40] Discordian ideas have since been popularized by authors like Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, whose *Illuminatus* trilogy forged a unique mixture of conspiracy theory, occultism, and wild humor. Wilson's goal is nothing less than an "operation mindfuck" designed to shock us out of our conventional ways of thinking about reality.[41]

As outlined in the *Principia Discordia,* reality is fundamentally chaos, confusion, and disorder, which we thinly veil with an illusion of stability. In fact, the root of our problems is that we vainly attempt to impose order upon the world when it really isn't needed. The central deity for the Discordian is thus Eris, the Greek Goddess of confusion, who is said to have begun the Trojan War by appearing at a crowded party and throwing a golden apple with the word "Kallisti" ("to the fairest") written upon it. Their sacred symbol, in turn, is the "Chao," a yin-yang symbol that replaces the dots with a pentagon and the golden apple of Eris. This sacred "hodgepodge" represents the endless cycle of order and disorder, the flow of power between stability and chaos, that constitutes all existence. As such, the Discordians claim they have been talking about "chaos theory" long before it ever became popular among scientists.[11] The threefold law of Discordianism is thus a remarkable fusion of Nietzsche ("God is dead"), Dostoevsky ("If God is dead, everything is permissible"), Crowley ("do what thou wilt"), and chaos theory. It is, in effect, putting chaos theory into practice:

ONE: Everything is true; everything is permissible.
TWO: Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.
THREE: All is chaos—order is just the prevailing form of chaos.[11]

A central aim of Discordian practice is a systematic—or perhaps systematically unsystematic—attempt to break down all conventional dualities and binary categories. And among the most basic of dualities to be dismantled is the conventional duality of male and female. From the perspective of Eris, or Discord, both male and female are arbitrary categories imposed on the underlying reality of disorder or chaos:

> DISORDER is simply unrelated information viewed through some particular grid. . . . Male, like female, is an idea about sex. To say that male-ness is "absence of female-ness," or vice versa, is a matter of definition and metaphysically arbitrary. The artificial concept of no-relation is the ERISTIC PRINCIPLE.[11]

Here we seem to be at the furthest extreme from the Wiccan realm of clear male and female ritual roles, the Horned God and the Great Goddess; for the Discordian, all these are but so many ironic masks worn by the playful spirit of Discord for its own perpetual amusement.

Psychological Anarchy and Sexual Liberation in Chaos Magic

> Reject then the obscenities of contrived uniformity, order, and purpose. Turn and face the tidal wave of Chaos from which philosophers have been fleeing in terror for millennia. Leap in and come out surfing its crest, sporting amidst the limitless weirdness and mystery in all things; for those who reject false certainties. Thank Chaos we shall never exhaust it. Create, destroy, enjoy, IO CHAOS!
> PETER J. CARROLL, *Principia Chaotica*

While the Discordians sought to deconstruct traditional religious ideals through humor, satire, and parody, the more recent movement of Chaos Magic would take this deconstructive impulse even further still. If the Discordians dismantle dualities and celebrate the divine play of discord, chaos magicians attempt to deconstruct all concepts of the self, the universe, religion, and reality altogether through radical, ecstatic, Zenlike shock tactics.

Probably the single most influential chaos magician is Peter J. Carroll. Indeed, if Crowley was the occult epitome of high modernism, Carroll is arguably his "postmodern successor." As Carroll recounts the origins of Chaos

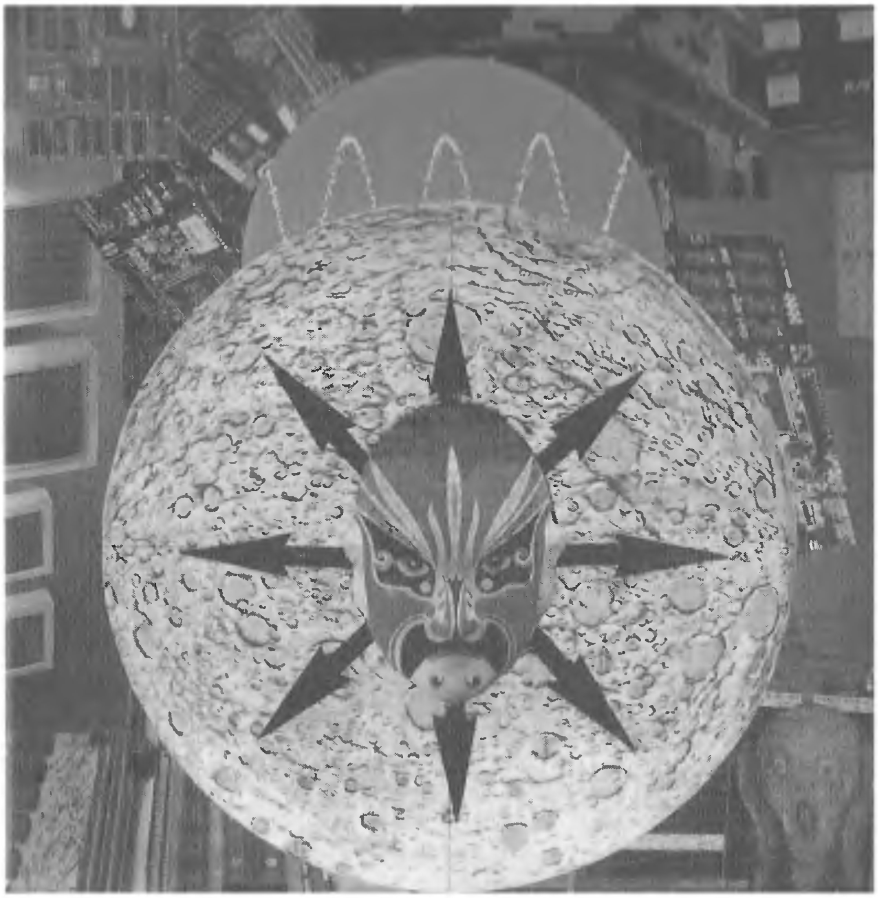


Figure 21. Cover image for Peter J. Carroll, *Psybermagick: Advanced Ideas in Chaos Magick* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1995).

Magic, the original inspiration was a meeting of an English and a German magician, who performed a Mass of Chaos in an abandoned ammunition dump in a mountain in the Rhineland and shortly thereafter began a unique new magical order. The organization of this order was, from its origins, intentionally "chaotic," that is, antihierarchical and fluid, with "less emphasis on discipline than on enthusiasm and creativity," in the hope of "calling the bluff" of the "great almighty gurus" who run most modern magical groups. Its ritual practice, too, was designed to be radically eclectic and open to any method that worked for an individual or a group of magicians: "Any contemporary order which wishes to remain alive, exciting and innovative requires a structure or at least a communication network to exist at all, but dogmatic ideas, rigid hierarchies and fixed teachings and beliefs will kill its creative spirit rapidly. . . . [T]he individual temples . . . experiment with whatever techniques, rituals and ideas they please."[15] In Carroll's vision, this radically disorganized, decentered, experimental form of magical religion represents the dawn of a new era. Building on Crowley's vision of the successive "aeons" of human history, he suggests that we have now entered into a new "fourth aeon," beyond even the third aeon of Horus predicted by the Great Beast:

> In the first aeon I was the Great Spirit
> In the second aeon, men knew me as the Horned God, Pangenitor
> Panphage
> In the third aeon, I was the Dark one, the devil
> In the fourth aeon, Men know me now, for I am the Hidden One
> In this new aeon I appear before you as Baphomet
> The God before all gods who shall endure to the end of the earth.[16]

As its name implies, much of the inspiration for Chaos Magic comes from new movements in physics and mathematics, above all quantum physics and chaos theory. As Carroll explains, quantum physics and chaos theory have radically challenged traditional physicists' models of the universe, exploding its tidy laws and dichotomies into the mind-boggling proliferation of possibilities. The best way to describe the reality discovered by modern physics is Chaos:

> In the Chaoist aeon, on whose threshold we stand, a new conception of psychic reality is forming. . . . The leading edge of quantum physics seems to be providing a theoretical basis for many of the phenomena rediscovered by the renaissance of interest in parapsychology and ancient magical practice. In this new paradigm . . . the animating force of the vast universe can be called Chaos. It is the inexpressible pregnant Void from which manifest existence, order, and form arise. . . . [I]ts most obvious manifestation is change.[17]

So, too, the idea of Chaos also radically challenges the traditional religious, cultural, and sexual ideals that have long enchained and oppressed human beings. And it is magical practice that can help free us from simplistic categories and binary divisions, opening up infinite new ways of imagining human sexuality, gender, and politics:

> The Quantum revolution dealt a death blow to the dualistic perception of the universe, and Chaos Physics will more or less finish it off. . . . We know that the Universe is much too complex (and wonderful) to be neatly labeled into opposites. . . . Anything might be possible, if we allow ourselves new possibilities. Take sexuality for instance. For safety's sake we define our sexuality according to labels, images, roles, politics, etc. But increasingly, we are discovering that sexuality chafes at being trapped in one mould. . . . The best kind of magick . . . is magick that liberates us from the chains of oppression.[18]

Perhaps the one thing that all chaos magicians would agree upon—even if they embrace radically different beliefs, practices, and sexual styles—is the ideal of radical *freedom* from all forms of social, political, and religious restraint. Going yet a step further than the Discordians—and again quoting Dostoevsky—the chaos magician's law is "Nothing is True. Everything is Permitted." As one chaos magician puts it,

> One thing that draws people to chaos magic is its freedom. A chaos magician can draw freely from any tradition . . . invoke and evoke "fictional" entities and generally do whatever she feels like, according to her own personal system of ethics and style. . . .
>
> We are all free to think and believe what we choose, when we choose, because ultimately, none of it is any more true than anything else. That is the power and the glamour of chaos magic. Zeus is as real as Isis is as real as Snoopy.[49]

Not surprisingly, a key part of this radical permissibility is sexual freedom. However, the chaos magicians are unique in emphasizing not only the creative, erotic aspect but also the destructive, negative aspect of liberation. Carroll's own magical order, IOT, derives its name from Eros and Thanatos, the primal forces of sex and death, creation and destruction; for true liberation is achieved through both the erotic and the deathly forms of magic: "Apart from being humanity's two greatest obsessions and motivating forces, sex and death represent the positive and negative methods of attaining magical consciousness. Illumination refers to the inspiration, enlightenment, and liberation resulting from success with these methods."[50] The ecstatic liberation the chaos magician seeks is the same uninhibited wildness of nature in its endless cycle of life and death, procreation and slaughter:

> The sexual aspects of the god-goddess Baphomet are always emphasized, for sex creates life, and sexuality is a measure of the life force. . . . The spirit of life forces the spirit of the dual ecstasy, procreation and reabsorption, sex and death, Beautiful and terrible. . . . God of conjoined lovers, God of the worm-filled carcass . . . God of the wild hunt carousing in the forest in mad exhilaration. Invoke this god with wild uninhibited love play, with wine and strange drugs.[51]

And this ecstatic liberation also entails the death of and liberation from boundaries of the self in the explosive *petit mort* of orgasm:

> When Eros moves in us
> We are most intensely ourselves
> But as Eros finally takes us
> The self is eclipsed, destroyed in orgasm the self is lost
> Chaos reminds us with a joke that we are nothing.[52]

Thus, sexual rites are among the most powerful techniques in chaotic magical practice. According to Carroll, the chaos magician is simply continuing the old tradition of the Gnostics and their explicitly transgressive, antinomian, at times even cannibalistic rites (at least as they were imagined by their critics in the mainstream church): "The Gnostics were true anarchists of the spirit. . . . Their orgiastic rites included the consumption (as sacraments) of the mixed male and female sexual elixirs and menstrual blood after coitus. . . . Their sexual rites were designed to . . . give an inspirational foretaste of the final reabsorption into Babalon."[53] The chaos magician, however, dares to go still further than the Gnostics, still further than even Crowley or Spare, by using all means to shatter his ordinary conception of reality and propel himself into liberating ecstasy. This is transgression on every possible level—not simply sexual transgression, but transgression of all rational thought and all conventional forms of perception in a "black mass against the gods of logic and rationality":

> There are no limits to the inconceivable experiences into which the intrepid psychonaut may wish to plunge himself. Here are some ideas for constructing a latter day black mass as a blasphemy against the gods of logic and rationality. The Great Mad Goddess Chaos . . . can be invoked for Her ecstasy and inspiration.
>
> Drumming, leaping and whirling in free form movement are accompanied by idiotic incantations. Forced deep breathing is used to provoke hysterical laughter. Mild hallucinogens and disinhibitory agents (such as alcohol) are taken together with sporadic gasps of nitrous oxide gas. Dice are thrown to determine what unusual behavior and sexual irregularities will take place. Discordant music is played and flashing lights splash onto billowing clouds of incense smoke. A whole maelstrom of ingredients is used to overcome the senses. On an altar a great work of philosophy, preferably by Russell, lies open, its pages fiercely burning.[54]

Here we have perhaps followed the quest for absolute transgression and liberation—which seems to be the recurring search throughout the history of modern sexual magic—to its furthest extreme. The aim of Chaos Magic is no longer simply transgression of social and sexual taboos, no longer an ideal of political liberation, no longer even the transgression of the boundaries of the self; rather, the aim here is the transgression of reality itself, the shattering of all known conceptions of the universe, and the liberating ecstasy of infinite transformation.

Postmodernism, Magic, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism

> The chaotic aspect of new aeon magic is psychological anarchy. It is a species of operation mindfuck applied to ourselves as much as the world. The aim is to produce inspiration and enlightenment through disordering our belief structures. Humor, random belief, counter-information and disinformation are its techniques.
> PETER J. CARROLL, *Liber Null and Psychonaut*

> [H]eteronomy is essential to paganism inasmuch as paganism is not atheism but implies rather that there are gods. Which means . . . that human beings are not the authors of what they tell, that is, of what they do.
> JEAN FRANÇOIS LYOTARD and JEAN-LOUP THÉBAUD, *Just Gaming*

With its central principle of "nothing is true, everything is permitted" and its rejection of all fixed models of reality, Chaos Magic would seem to be in many ways an ideal spiritual expression of many of the intellectual and aesthetic trends associated with postmodernism. As Lyotard suggests, postmodernism is itself a form of intellectual "paganism"; that is to say, it represents a radical rejection of all monolithic grand narratives about human history, whether they be the Christian narrative of redemption, the Enlightenment narrative of reason and progress, or the modern scientific narratives of ever-increasing knowledge and control of the natural world. For the postmodern/pagan, there is no "Truth" or "Certainty" but only so many relative, historically situated stories about the world, none of which has any privileged position:

> Paganism breaks with the modern concern for truth and certainty. . . . For paganism there are no privileged narratives, no metatheories of truth or grand historical narratives. . . . Marxism and other Enlightenment theories are historical, stories about the historical process, but not themselves the ground of history or truth.[55]

Much the same sentiment is expressed throughout the works of Carroll and other chaos magicians. In fact, many chaos magicians—who tend, on the whole, to be quite well read and aware of contemporary philosophical issues—explicitly identify their antiauthoritarian and pluralistic outlook as "postmodern" or even a "postmodern system of Occultism."[56] Carroll thus describes his magic as a "vibrant post-modernist Chaoism," as much opposed to the touchy-feely New Age as it is to hard-core fundamentalism.[57] As widely read chaos author Phil Hine puts it,

> Modern society is chaotic and fragmentary. . . . Diversity rules, in a display of increasingly fragmented subcultures and nested beliefs. . . . Mass communication systems have shrunk the world, and it is possible to discern a wide variety of cultural styles and epochs melting together in music, art fashion, literature and food. The profusion of magical and mythological systems available to the modern occultists also demonstrates this trend. . . . Postmodernism breaks with the Modernist idea of progress and historical continuity, and instead ransacks all available cultures and time zones in a diverse exercise in collage. The immediacy of experience becomes the important fact rather than continuity with the past. . . . This is an age where magic might thrive.[58]

As Carroll observes, Western society has entered a state of permanent crisis and perpetual change, in which traditional religious institutions have failed, and even modern science has proved more destructive than beneficial for human life. Meanwhile, we have also unleashed a wild proliferation of new religions, gurus, and occult practices, which leaves the individual seeker free to construct a personal worldview out of this maelstrom of competing realities:

> Our own civilization has moved into an epoch of permanent crisis and upheaval, and we are beset with a plague of wizards. They serve an historic purpose, for whenever a society undergoes radical change, alternative spiritualities proliferate and from among these a vulture will select its new worldview. . . . Orthodox hierarchical monotheistic religions are a spent force spiritually and intellectually, although there will be some bloody battles before they are completely finished. Science has brought us power and ideas but not the wisdom or responsibility to handle them.[59]

Thus, much like Lyotard, chaos magicians reject any singular, monolithic view of reality; as Carroll puts it, "Absolute truth would be absolute tyranny and historically it has always been,"[60] and philosophers, meanwhile, "have become no more than the keepers of useful sarcasms, for the secret is out that there is no secret of the universe."[61] The new millennium of Chaos, Carroll predicts, will witness a series of upheavals and deathblows to outdated perspectives on reality: the death of spirituality, the death of identity, the death of belief, and the death of ideology.[62] Like many postmodern authors, the chaos magician even declares the death of the "self," which also proves to be a conventional fiction and a cause for laughter at one's own foolishness: "Some philosophers . . . bemoan the disintegration or fragmentation of the self in the contemporary world. We celebrate this development. The belief in a single self stems from religious monotheisms having only a single god. Let us throw out the baby with the bath water."[63]

All worldviews and theories of reality are relative, and thus no one is any more or less valid than any other; it is simply a matter of what an individual chooses to believe at a given moment for a particular purpose: "A further implication of the principle of relativity of belief is that all beliefs are considered to be arbitrary and contingent. Consequently all notions of absolute truth only exist if we choose to believe them at any time."[64]

Like postmodernism, Chaos Magic is therefore radically *pragmatic, experimental, and experiential.* What matters is not what one believes but simply *what works* for a given individual in a given situation. The chaos magician is free to sort through the vast array of possible spiritual and ritual alternatives, to select the ones he or she finds most useful, and to patch together a syncretic new practice adapted to a particular context. Thus, Crowleyian sex magick could be combined with Buddhist mandala meditation or the Sioux sun dance as easily as the Wiccan Great Rite could be mixed with Tantra and LSD:

> It is techniques and intention that are important in successful magic. . . . [O]ne can structure a ritual or spell with just about any form of symbolism from Tibetan Tantra to Icelandic Runelore. And indeed, where else but in the Pact could you find magicians experimenting with Runic Sex Magic? . . . I notice the eclectic approach becoming ever more pervasive in esoterics. Insights and ideas are now poached shamelessly from one so-called tradition to another, but this is how it should be, and Chaos Magic boldly encourages the meta-tradition which takes anything and everything that is effective from all traditions to create an explosive mixture.[65]

Given its radically antiauthoritarian and nonhierarchical stance, Chaos Magic shares much in common with the political attitudes of many postmodern authors. Abandoning both Enlightenment utopian ideals and Marxist revolution as vain illusions, many postmodern authors have retreated from the political sphere altogether, dismissing any hope for revolutionary political change as simply another "meet the new boss, same as the old boss" scenario. And many have followed Michel Foucault and his rejection of any sort of "macro-political" solution, that is, massive change on the scale of national struggle, and turned instead to a "micro-political" search for "local resistance"—that is, resistance on the small scale of individual action. As Foucault puts it, we have to "liberate" ourselves not just from political institutions but from ourselves, that is, from the oppressive subjectivity that has been imposed upon us: "[T]he political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state . . . but to liberate us from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us."[66] Carroll and other chaos magicians adopt much the same stance when they associate magic with resistance against oppression, yet refuse to identify with any particular sort of politics; in fact, they often reject politics altogether as a simple power game played by the rich and privileged:

> Magic is aligning itself against oppressive forms of order in many fields. . . . Magic rejects politics as no more than some people's perverse desire to dominate others. It . . . advocates instead personal enlightenment and emancipation, which are the only real safeguards to freedom. Magic is anti-ideological because the main products of ideological solutions are repression and corpses. . . . Magic's commitment to the good is reflected in its concern with individual freedom and consciousness.[67]

As in much postmodern thought, the liberation that the chaos magician seeks goes beyond simple political, social, or even sexual freedom; the chaos magician seeks freedom from the limits of consciousness itself, through intense, ecstatic, hypersensual experiences. As Carroll's *Principia Chaotica* declares, "Turn and face the tidal wave of Chaos from which philosophers have been fleeing in terror for millennia. Leap in and come out surfing its crest, sporting amidst the limitless weirdness and mystery in all things. . . . Create, destroy, enjoy . . . !" For chaos magicians, liberation must be total; they must be "omnivorous" in their experiences, willing to engage in any sacrilege, sexual transgression, and even "self-destruction" in order to be free:

> Eat all loathsome things till they no longer revolt. Seek union with all that you normally reject. Scheme against your most sacred principles in thought, word and deed. You will eventually have to witness the loss and putrefaction of every loved thing. . . . Examine everything you believe, every preference and every opinion, and cut it down. . . . The only clear view is from atop the mountain of your dead selves.[68]

Hence it is not entirely surprising that, much like postmodernism in recent years, Chaos Magic has in many ways begun to "deconstruct" itself. Though extremely popular in the 1980s, Chaos Magic has in many ways "exhausted" itself, as many like Carroll have withdrawn from the IOT Pact and have moved into still more individualized and anti-institutional forms of practice. After all, an organized movement of Chaos Magic is inherently contradictory and could only logically end by dismantling itself in its own act of total liberation.[69]

SEX MAGIC FOR THE MASSES: FROM CHAOS MAGIC TO CYBER-PAGANISM AND MAGICAL CONSUMPTION

> [M]any people are scared of information about sex magick being made available in clear language to the masses. I find this attitude both elitist and anachronistic. There should be no fears.
> DONALD MICHAEL KRAIG, *Modern Sex Magick*

> We can only escape the bloody and ignorant nightmare of history by exploring alternatives which today look frighteningly weird.
> PETER J. CARROLL, *PsyberMagick*

The relentless drive for liberation in all forms—social, political, sexual—that characterizes much of modern magic has also led to the liberation of sexual magic from its own once highly esoteric domain. No longer an obscure, complicated, difficult, and rather elitist practice reserved for the lunatic or aristocratic fringe of the occult universe, sex magic has now entered fully into contemporary popular culture. Now anyone with $19.95 to spend can possess the *Art of Sexual Magic* or the secrets of *Modern Sex Magick*, while anyone with a good Internet connection can discover "Tantra: Sex Magic Reality Creation Process," download the complete works of Crowley, and debate the sexual controversies surrounding the OTO. Most contemporary magicians, moreover, see this "de-esotericization" of sexual magic as a good thing. Even though the techniques of sexual magic may be potentially dangerous—as P. B. Randolph and the H.B. of L. once warned—most magicians today don't see this as a serious problem. As Donald Michael Kraig argues, it is no more dangerous to have the "explosive power" of sexual magic available than it is to have the knowledge to make nuclear bombs in the public domain: "I don't agree with those who say we have to hide such secrets from people who are not ready for them. . . . The published information on making nuclear weapons has not brought about the creation of such weaponry by average people in every city."[70]

As various authors observe, this easy access to a wide array of formerly esoteric materials seems to be a basic part of late capitalist consumer culture at the turn of the millennium. Just as we may now choose from several dozen brands of laundry detergent or deodorant at our local Wal-Mart, so too may we now choose from a wide array of esoteric sexual rites drawn from around the world, and all readily available via Amazon.com:

> Esoteric texts once known to a privileged few now fill the bookstores, their myriad truths laid open to be read and recombined at will. . . . This robust spiritual marketplace perfectly suits the consumer mentality that has turned Americans into a nation of comparison shoppers. In an age when we trust

> ourselves to assemble our own investment portfolio and cancer therapies, why not our religious beliefs?"[1]

At the same time that sexual magic has been increasingly "de-esotericized" and democratized, it has also been pushed into more or less every imaginable sexual variation, expression, transgression, and taboo violation. Thus, one contemporary sex magician named Nema suggests creative sexual-magical practices such as autoerotic invocation of god-forms, in which one masturbates while chanting a deity's name until the "orgasm explodes into full god-consciousness and the rest of the ritual is spent sensing, seeing and thinking as the god." Other techniques include the "Mass of Maat," which uses oral sex as part of the rite; and finally, the most intense method of all which can raise a "veritable cyclone of energy" is one of "mutual oral sex, simultaneous felatio and cunnilingus, '69' with a difference.'"[2]

While some have decried this "exotericization" of esoteric materials as a tragic and dangerous profanation, others have celebrated it as a much needed liberation of sexual secrets for a new generation. But in either case the secret is very much "out," and it has in fact proliferated in a wildly chaotic diversity of so-called secrets of sexual magic.

The Magic of Cyberspace

> So, on with the pursuit of the Great Work of Magic, with whatever forms of Techno-Shamanism, Tantric Goetia or Greco-Egyptian Quantum Physics we can make work for us. . . . We have the technology and we're crazy enough to use it!
> PETER J. CARROLL, "The Pact (IOT)—The Story So Far"

> New information technology has bred a lot of desktop Satanists and bulletin boards . . . cyberspace seems to be just full of Satanists. The Christian heretics rarely get much further than designing letterheads.
> ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*

Nowhere is the democratization of sexual magic—along with the potential problems it raises—more apparent than in the strange new techno-imaginal spaces of the World Wide Web. As Manuel Castells suggests, the new society forming through the Web and other information technologies represents nothing less than a "qualitative change in the human experience";[3] and this includes spiritual experience. The Web has clearly opened up a whole new virtual universe of possibilities for more or less every religious tradition and every brand of personal spirituality, as practically every local parish or temple has its own Web site, individuals are able to post their own blogs of personal spiritual diaries, and we can now even enter virtual temples and engage in online rituals in a wide array of cyber-religions. As high priest of the psychedelic revolution Timothy Leary observed, computers have added a powerful new element to the eclectic mix of shamanic techniques now available in our globalized, postmodern age:

> What is so intriguing about our own era in history is that the human quest for knowledge . . . in the last 25 years has seen an amazing blend of shamanic techniques, psychedelic drugs and the international global boom in resurrecting the pre-Christian, pagan, totemic and Hindu traditions. At the same time, with these computers . . . you can walk around in realities of our own construction. . . . [W]e have ancient techniques merging with the most modern. Computers give us the ways to communicate with the basic language of the universe—which is quanta-electronic. Matter and bodies are just electrons that have decided to come together, buzzing around with information.[74]

Perhaps no new religious movement has made better use of the Web than the neo-pagan communities, including the more radical strands such as Chaos Magic, which have now become among the most widely traveled sites on the information superhighway. "It is the Net that has brought Neopaganism way up in the popularity charts. Look at the site Witch's Voice. According to www.hitbox.com, it is the most popular religious Web site."[75] Meanwhile, a whole new breed of pagans has emerged, calling themselves technopagans or cyberpagans, "who keep one foot in the emerging technosphere and one foot in the wild and wooly world of Paganism."[76] We now find a wide array of cyberpagans from many subcultures, including "Deadhead computer hackers, ravers . . . and New Age technophiles. Cyberdelia reconciles the transcendentalist impulses of sixties counterculture with the infomania of the nineties. . . . it nods in passing to the seventies, from which it borrows the millenarian mysticism of the New Age and the apolitical self-absorption of the human potential movement."[77]

This fusion of ancient paganism and postmodern cyberspace is not entirely surprising, however. Indeed, there does seem to be a kind of natural fit between neo-paganism—particularly in its more chaotic forms—and the new information technologies. As Sara Reeder observes, the pagan revival and the new technological revolutions emerged at roughly the same time and in the same geographic areas: "Silicon valley and the modern Wiccan revival literally took root and grew up alongside each other in the rich black clay surrounding San Francisco Bay. . . . both blossomed in the 1960s—the Valley through the miracle of the space program, by way of Haight Street's prominence as the worldwide Counterculture HQ."[78]

The rapidly expanding virtual realms of cyberspace have facilitated this fusion of technology, postmodernism, and paganism in a variety of ways. First and foremost, the Web is a uniquely decentralized, relatively nonhierarchical, and inherently chaotic sort of space, in which anyone with access to a server can set up shop alongside the U.S. government and the Catholic Church. Second, the structure of the Web inherently leads to a radical "proliferation of narratives"; far from offering a single truth or monolithic narrative, the Web allows for an endless dissemination of worldviews, as everything from the IMF to Vajrayana Buddhism can be quickly browsed on slickly designed home pages. Third, this wild proliferation of worldviews lends itself naturally to the sort of freewheeling eclecticism and pastiche that characterizes so much of postmodern culture. As Douglas Rushkoff observes in his study of cyberspace, "the neopagan revival incorporates ancient and modern skills in free-for-all sampling of whatever works, making no distinction between occult magic and high technology"; in the words of one pagan he interviewed, "High technology and high magic are the same thing. They both use tools from inner resources and outer resources. . . . We humans are all shape-shifters. We just learn to access our DNA codes. It's very computer oriented. We are computers: our minds are computers, our little cells are computers. We are bio-organic computers."[79] For many, this encounter between magic and cybertechnology is itself a new kind of computer shamanism that can reboot our innate magical software. According to one Chaos Magic group, the Templum Nigri Solis,

> [W]e now inhabit a cyber age, where information and technology are easily accessed. This is the mirror of the Shamanic age, when knowledge was free to those who wished to reach out and interface with it directly. . . . We still have the neurological hardware that caused bushes to burn and dragons to walk the earth, and there is a new magical technology that allows us to reboot it. This is Chaos Magic. . . . This new technology brings the Magician the realization that everything is possible.[80]

Indeed, some chaos magicians have suggested that the computer itself can become not just an accessory but a central tool and focal point in magical practice. Not only are computers useful in facilitating communication between practitioners disconnected in physical space, building virtual libraries, and even simulating a virtual ritual environment through online ceremonies, but the mesmerizing digital display of the computer screen itself can even become a meditative aid or ritual prop: "for example, meditating on specially designed screensavers or slideshows (don't think this works? observe kids who spend half their waking lives playing *Street fighter* . . .)." Finally, the computer itself can be charged and serve as a powerful magical tool: "A computer can be used as a tool or empowered as a magical artifact in the same manner as a dagger, or cup. The difference is, the computer is the most versatile tool currently known."[81]

Not unlike sex magic itself, the rapidly expanding virtual space of the Web has elicited very strong reactions, both negative and positive, both dystopian and utopian. For its critics, the Web represents the end of meaningful human community and personal interaction, as Web surfers become disembodied, anonymous digits in a vast, increasingly commercialized cyber shopping mall; meanwhile the very real global socioeconomic disparities between those who can afford the hardware, software, and leisure time to surf the Net and those who can't even afford two cups of rice a day is growing wider and more horrific day by day.[82]

For its advocates, conversely, the new spaces of the Web open up all sorts of new, radically democratic, perhaps revolutionary possibilities. As Margaret Wertheim suggests in *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace,* the Internet has generated a whole new concept of space—the interconnected space of the global computer network—which to many seems to promise utopian and even millennial potential.[83] According to Terrence McKenna, one of the most outspoken proponents of the cyberdelic revolution, the new spaces opened by the Web represent a technological and spiritual shift as profound as the invention of the printing press, with even more radically liberating possibilities. Thus, in order to take full advantage of these new technospiritual possibilities, we need a new kind of "technological or scientific shamanism":

> In the same way that McLuhan saw print culture as replacing an earlier eye-oriented manuscript culture, my hope is that cyberdelic culture is going to overcome the linear, uniform bias of print and carry us into the realm of the visible Logos . . . what these new technologies are doing is dissolving boundaries.[84]

For its proponents, the Internet would seem to offer the same utopian dream of a liberated society imagined by Randolph, Crowley, and the other great sexual magicians. And clearly, one of the primary reasons for the appeal—and the fear—of the Internet lies in the freedom it offers to disseminate sexually explicit materials. With pornography now accounting for 60 percent of its use, according to some estimates, the Internet would seem to represent not just a cyberdelic revolution but a new form of cybersexual revolution. As Gavin Baddeley observes in his study of modern Satanism, "The largest growth area in porn over the last decade has been the internet—where devotees of the most exotic fetishes imaginable can find kindred spirits. . . . The Internet has been the subject of numerous scare stories, not the least because it's difficult . . . to monitor or censor."[85] And many, like Carol Parker, in *The Joy of Cybersex*, have celebrated the Web as a "brave new world of virtual sex," where sex can be "taken out of our bedrooms" in order to be "played with, experimented with, [and] bent completely out of shape."[86]

Of course, many critics have deplored this aspect of the Internet, which according to Dennis Altman, simply comes down to "little more than heightened masturbation."[87] Many cyberpagans, however, have celebrated the new sexual freedoms offered by the Web as a radical new form of sexual expression. As Don Webb argues in his online "Sex Magic Primer," sex has been repressed and controlled by society for centuries, but now, using sexual magical techniques, we can unleash the ultimate godlike power that lies within our own bodies:

> Sex magic is as old as mankind. Everyone, even in the dullest vanilla relationship, has felt at some time that it's magical. . . . Sex is used by the forces of society . . . to make us do anything from buy a certain brand of car to vote in certain ways. If we allow ourselves to be entranced by these prepackaged images of sex—instead of creating our own magic—we are slaves. If we begin the realization of our fantasies, we begin to participate in what it is to be gods.[88]

Here the cybersex magician seems to have revived the old dream of Paracelsus and the other alchemists of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance: the dream of attaining godlike power, of discovering the magical secret of creation itself. As Mark C. Taylor observes:

> The vision of the alchemists' creative power . . . emerges in the recurrent fantasy of creating an homunculus. . . . [T]he aspiration to create an homunculus expresses the desire to become God. The homunculus of the ancients . . . is the distant ancestor of the contemporary alchemists, replicants, androids, terminators and cyborgs. Today, in our post-industrial world, for those who have terminal faith, to become one with the matrix is to attain immortality by being transformed into the divine.[89]

And this, in the end, is perhaps only a new twist on what Crowley described over a half century ago—namely, "the great idea of magicians in all times—To obtain a Messiah by some adaptation of the sexual process. . . . [T]he root idea is that any form of procreation other than normal is likely to produce results of a magical character."[90] The modern technopagans have simply employed new forms of cybersex to achieve this supranormal, magical procreation.

The Magical Logic of Late Capitalism: From Sexual Fetishism to Commodity Fetishism

> 23 Nov. . . . Object: Immediate money (Interpreted as from an unexpected source before Sunday . . .)
>
> The Operation was good as to concentration, mediocre orgiastically
>
> 25 Nov. A letter came saying 800 pounds was being found for me.
>
> ALEISTER CROWLEY, *Rex de Arte Regia,* in *The Magical Record of the Beast 666*

In the new magical and erotic spaces of the World Wide Web, we seem to find the natural convergence of a number of themes that we have been exploring throughout this book: sexual magic, postmodern pluralism, the search for individual and social liberation, and the consumer ethic of late capitalism. Indeed, the bewildering new global space of the Internet—with both its utopian promise and dystopian fears—seems to be a kind of mirror of what Fredric Jameson calls "the bewildering new world space of late or multinational capital" itself.[91] The Internet has given birth not only to new forms of expression and personal freedom, but also to a vast cyber shopping mall, in which religious traditions and spiritual ideals are as readily available as pornography or CDs: "it may often seem that what we now have is a cyber-shopping mall. It offers infinite choices in the metaphysical/digital as well as the physical/material realm."[92] As Castells observes, the constantly shifting, morphing, expanding space of the Internet does fit well with the flexible nature of late capitalism, but it also has created a new, almost magical virtual space that opens a whole new universe in which these transformations can take place: "While the eternal/ephemeral time of the new culture does fit well with the logic of flexible capitalism and with the dynamics of the network society, it adds its own powerful layer, installing individual dreams and collective representations in a no-time mental landscape."[93]

Sex has become a central part of both the logic of postmodern consumer culture and the new mental landscapes of cyberspace. As sociologists like Bryan S. Turner and Mark Featherstone have argued, early modern forms of capitalism were based on an attitude of saving, restraint, thrift, and physical asceticism; the new forms of late capitalism, conversely, are based much more on consumption, expenditure, and intense physical pleasure: "The new consumptive ethic . . . taken over by the advertising industry celebrates living for the moment, hedonism, self-expression, the body beautiful, progress, freedom from social obligation."[94] As Daniel Bell put it in his *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism,* sexual experience has displaced even money as the central object of worship in Western culture: "the cult of the Orgasm succeeded the cult of Mammon as the basic passion of American life."[95] Other critics like Herbert Marcuse have suggested that contemporary society is now based on a kind of manipulation and exploitation of sexuality in the interests of consumer capitalism. We now see, he thinks, a kind of "repressive desublimation"; in the name of sexual "freedom" and the "liberation" of eros, we are now in a sense enslaved to a consumer culture in which sex is used more to sell and make us buy things than to achieve any sort of real emancipation.[96]

Sexual magic, perhaps more than any other of the new spiritual technologies now available, seems ideally suited both to the new realms of cyberspace and to this postmodern logic of late capitalism. With their emphasis on intense sensual experience, constant transformation, and radical freedom, these new forms of *magia sexualis* might even be called the "magical logic of late capitalism." That is, they endow the seemingly "profane" aspects of postmodern consumer society (computers, the Internet, pornography, money) with seemingly magical attributes (utopian spaces, magical communication, spiritual ecstasy, ultimate meaning, and power).

Of course, sexual magic has its own long history of association with techniques aimed at financial well-being and material gain. From Randolph's time onward, and continuing with Crowley and his disciples, sex magic has long been a favorite technique used to acquire money and material comforts. As Carroll observes, money is one of the most powerful gods on the planet today, and therefore one of the richest sources of magical power:

> Never insult money or blaspheme it. . . . If you want money, then sacrifice it only on opportunities which will make money. Treat money as a major God: for its capricious and awesome power rivals that of even love and war. Money acts as a vast, intelligent organism which lives by occupying the brain of nearly everyone on this planet. Mammon seems far more awake at this moment than many gods we could mention.[97]

Many cybermagicians are even bolder in their claims for the financial uses of sexual magic; thus if we browse online articles like "Sex Magic" and "What Is Spiritual Sex?" we can learn simple techniques using sexual energy to cause wealth and prosperity to flow into our lives:

> Do you know the tantric secret about orgasms? While releasing in orgasm, you can perform white magic by visualizing ways you would like Life to be. You can picture anything, such as being deeply in love, or money flowing abundantly in your life.[98]
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> The SMRCP [Sex Magic Reality Creation Process] is about maintaining one's focus during orgasm and channeling the energy into creating reality, any reality, whether it's creating a new job, car, experience, relationships, etc.

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> The SMRCP [Sex Magic Reality Creation Process] is about maintaining one's focus during orgasm and channeling the energy into creating reality, any reality, whether it's creating a new job, car, experience, relationships, etc.

> See, hear, taste, smell and feel the creation as if it's real. . . . What is your life like when you earn $85,000? What does it FEEL like? Make it big, in Technicolor. . . . Do whatever brings you to orgasm . . . masturbation or sex with a supportive partner.[99]

I recently came across one of the more blatant examples of this sexual-magical-commodity-fetishism in an article by LaSara Firefox, also known as "Sexy Witch," who described her practice of magical masturbation as a means to obtain a new computer. After attending a workshop on Chaos Magick, this "healer/whore/Tantric Goddess" learned how to make sigils using the autoerotic techniques of Austin Osman Spare and soon acquired her desired laptop:

> A few years ago when I was working as a hands-on healer/whore/Tantric Goddess, I didn't have a computer. One may think working as a healer/whore/Tantric Goddess means a computer would be well within reach, but not so. . . .
>
> "But how did you get your computer?" you ask. The answer is simple: lots of masturbation whilst focusing on a series of lovely little sigils. I started with sigil phrases like "I will own a Mac Laptop" and progressed to "I will be gifted with a Mac Laptop." Sex is energy, so I suggest masturbating while chanting, rubbing the piece of paper on your body or maybe drawing it on yourself with sensual oil. Let your imagination run wild.[100]

Here we find the complete confluence of sex, magic, consumer desire, and new technology in the strange new era of globalization and late capitalism: the Tantric goddess has used the techniques of Austin Spare to get herself a Mac laptop. If there is any good definition of "postmodernism," this is surely it.

In this sense, sexual magic represents a kind of postmodern transformation, reversal, or perhaps simply an extension of Marx's concept of the magical nature of commodity fetishism. For Marx, the commodity in the capitalist system tends to acquire a mystical quality, as something almost "magical" or animate, while at the same time masking the real social relations and human labor that created it: "A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. The mysterious character of the commodity form consists simply in the fact that the commodity reflects back the social characteristics of men's own labor as objective characteristics of the products of the labor themselves."[101] The case of sex magic takes this sort of fetishism to a whole new level. Now the commodity is not simply endowed with magical and mysterious qualities, but magical techniques and "spiritual labor" are actually *employed* in the hoping of acquiring material commodities. In the process, however, the real social relations and human labor that created these commodities are perhaps even further obfuscated and concealed.

CONCLUSION: THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF LATE CAPITALISM

> Ecstatic fulfillment of ecstasy, is it asking too much? . . .
> What is all thought but a morality of the senses that
> has become sex?
>
> AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE, *The Focus of Life*

> In conclusion, there is no conclusion. Things go on as they always have, getting weirder all the time.
>
> ROBERT ANTON WILSON, introduction to the *Principia Discordia*

The rise of Chaos Magic and various forms of cybermagic bring together many of the recurring themes that have appeared throughout the history of modern sexual magic. Above all, they have taken the search for radical liberation on the individual, social, and metaphysical levels to its furthest possible extremes. From the time of Austin Osman Spare down to chaos magicians like Peter J. Carroll, this search for liberation has gone well beyond the goals of mere sexual or even political freedom; the goal now is nothing less than the shattering of reality and the boundaries of the self. And to this end, any and all sexual means can be used. As one cybersexual magician tells us, "any sexual activity can be used to work sex magick. It can be practiced alone, it can be practiced with a partner of the same sex or of the opposite sex, and in advanced sex magick it is also possible to work with more people. . . . it can be genital, oral or anal sex; it can be bondage, bizarre sex or whatever; as long as all partners included enjoy it."[102] In sum, as the Nikolas and Zeena Schreck observe, the sexual magician today has a tremendous array of techniques and methods by which to seek "illuminated libertinage," as well as a radical freedom to pick, choose, and recombine them according to one's own desire:

> The adept of the sinister current in this age is no longer compelled to follow only one route to illuminated libertinage. Unlike your ancient forebears, limited in access to information, you can afford to take an eclectic approach to accomplish the magician's task . . . to integrate complex symbolic systems, synthesize them with personal experience and create from this synthesis [your] own unique direction on the left-hand path.[103]

In this sense, the new generation of postmodern sexual magicians clearly embodies and even exaggerates the extreme rejection of all sexual inhibitions that Michael Mason thinks characterizes contemporary society as a whole—"not just activity, but liberation, emancipation, freedom; not just hedonism, but disinhibition; not just tolerance, but hostility to taboos and censorship."[104]

At the same time, these new forms of magic also express the deep tension that runs throughout the history of sexual magic, reflecting both the utopian promise of sexual freedom and its tendency to become yet another commodity within a vast supermarket of cultures and traditions. As Jameson observed, this tension between the hope for freedom and the tendency toward commodification haunts much of postmodern society as a whole. If postmodernism represents in a sense the "cultural logic of late capitalism," then the question is whether that leaves any hope that it might also pose a challenge or resistance to the capitalist system: "Postmodernism replicates or reproduces—reinforces—the logic of consumer capitalism; the more significant question is whether there is also a way in which it resists that logic. But that is a question we must leave open."[105]

The same tension, I would argue, lies at the heart of many of the new forms of Chaos Magic and cyberpaganism, which in their own way reflect the "magical logic of late capitalism." Are they merely reflections of an increasingly pluralistic, rapidly changing, hedonistic, and "chaotic" consumer society? Or do they also offer the hope for breaking free of that culture? Does the quest for radical liberation from even the boundaries of the self really lead to any meaningful sort of freedom? Or has it simply transformed the ideas of "liberation" and "transgression" themselves into commodities that can be purchased for $19.95 from Amazon.com? In this sense, these new forms of magic are striking examples of the deeper "cultural contradictions of late capitalism"—or more specifically, the "sexual contradictions of late capitalism"—that run through contemporary society as a whole.

Conclusion

The Lessons of King Lamus: Religion, Sexuality, and Liberation in a "Post-Orgy" World

Conjugial love is of infinite variety.
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, *Conjugial Love*

Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but one endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as the point of support, as a linchpin for the most varied strategies.
MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality,* volume 1

There may be some things better than sex, and there may be some things worse. But there's nothing quite like it.
W. C. FIELDS

Here at the end of my foray into the history of modern sexual magic, I can not help but feel a bit like Pendragon and Lou, the characters in Aleister Crowley's infamous semiautobiographical novel *The Diary of a Drug Fiend.* After retracing a two-hundred-year quest for radical freedom and liberation on every level—sexual, social, political, and psychological alike—I feel a bit of the same exhaustion they felt after their journey through cocaine use, heroin addiction, and extreme sexual license. As Pendragon and Lou careen wildly on heroin and cocaine, whirling "from pleasure to pleasure in an inexhaustible rush," the entire world becomes a bewildering blur of transformation. Yet, amid this frantic blur of modern life, they see a glimmer of the eternal:

> Lou and I were living minute by minute, second by second. A tick of the clock marked for us an interval of eternity. . . . We were living according to the instruction of the Savior: "Take no thought for the morrow." . . . Limitations were abhorrent.
>
> [C]ocaine insists upon one's living upon one's capital and insures that the fund is inexhaustible. . . . It is a blind excitement of so sublime a character that it is impossible to worry about anything. . . . As Blake said, "Everything that lives is holy." Every act is a sacrament.[1]

As Crowley himself observed, his wildly unrestrained characters are not unlike the whole state of the modern West, driven relentlessly on by the need for wealth and the endless consumption of resources: "The need for the stuff drove us relentlessly on. . . . Even large doses did hardly more than restore us to our normal . . . pre-drug selves. We were like Europe after the war."[2] He goes on to observe that it was this same unrestrained will to power that enabled the British to conquer huge portions of the world and build one of the largest empires ever known:

> When one is on cocaine's honeymoon, one really is . . . superior to one's fellows. One attacks every problem with perfect confidence. . . . The British Empire is due to this spirit. Our young men went out to India and all sorts of places and walked all over everybody because they were too ignorant to realize the difficulties in their way.[3]

After their dizzying descent into drug abuse and hedonistic abandon, however, Pendragon and Lou experience the devastating depression of coming down. Crowley himself compares this eventual burnout to the same sense of expenditure and chaos that pervaded Europe as a whole in the aftermath of World War I:

> [M]oney's been frightfully tight since the war. . . . What with the collapse in the foreign exchanges, the decrease in the purchasing power of money and world's gold all locked up in exchanges, things are pretty awkward. . . . Victorian prosperity made us all rich without our knowing a thing about it or doing anything for it.[4]

Ironically, Crowley's characters finally find solace and redemption from their addictions in the refuge of King Lamus in Telypylus—a figure who is a thinly masked representation of Crowley himself and his own Abbey of Thelema. King Lamus frees his disciples by teaching them how to indulge in all manner of drugs, sex, and other vices, yet without becoming attached to them. That is, he allows them to experience all desires in order to free them of the tantalizing desire for their forbidden fruit. Yet while this strategy of freedom through indulgence works well in Crowley's novel, it does not appear to have worked so well in Crowley's own life. Rather, the Beast spent his last years largely in isolation, increasingly addicted to heroin and apparently exhausted of his own once infinite will to power. As John Symonds put it, "He literally wore himself out in acts which had as their object the establishing of the Law of Do What Thou Wilt."[5]

In this regard—as in so many others—Crowley is at once an epitome of his own generation and a remarkable foreshadowing of our own world at the turn of the new millennium. In his own life and work, he reflects the "exhaustion of modernity" as a whole, that is, the collapse of England and Europe at midcentury, amid the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust.[6]

He is in this sense a remarkably prescient herald of postmodernism, which emerges out of the same sense of disillusionment, exhaustion, and skepticism toward the great narratives of modernism in the late twentieth century. As such, Crowley and his characters epitomize two of the most important themes running throughout this book: (1) the recurring link between sexual liberation and the larger goals of social, political, or psychological liberation; and (2) the recurring tendency for this ideal of sexual liberation to become mingled with less admirable sorts of things, such as misogyny, drug abuse, or simple commercialization.

Obviously, this relatively brief history of modern sexual magic cannot claim to be comprehensive. There are many other figures that could have been discussed here, such as the enigmatic German occultist Franz Bardon, the Russian-born sex magician Maria de Naglowska, and Robert and Mary Anne DeGrimston, the founders of the radical 1960s movement known as The Process.[7] One might also examine the reappearance of these sexual magical themes in contemporary American popular culture, such as Dan Brown's *DaVinci Code,* which revives the old narratives of Gnostic sexual rites and Goddess-worship for a new age of consumers.

Yet even from the figures discussed in this book, we can see that these sexual magicians represent something far more significant and more interesting than the weird antisocial subversives portrayed by the media. Indeed, they provide a remarkable window or *magnifying glass* onto some of the most intense points of ambivalence in specific periods of modern history: the Victorian tension between romantic and sexual love; the fear of nonreproductive sexual acts like masturbation or homosexual intercourse; the importation of exotic sexual practices from the "mysterious Orient"; concerns about population control and "national virility"; the rise of feminism and women's rights; reactions against the sexual revolution; and, finally, the impact of new information technologies and the magic of cyberspace.

In each of these cases, the literature on sexual magic has highlighted some of the most complex debates surrounding sexuality in modern Western culture, foreseeing many of the fundamental sexual tensions within our own generation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As postmodern theorists like Jean Baudrillard have observed, the problem for our generation is not so much that we are still in need of sexual liberations or freedom from the prudish taboos of our Victorian forefathers; rather, the dilemma today is perhaps that we have passed through *too many* sexual revolutions, that we have violated so many sexual, moral, and social taboos that we don't really know what sex *is* anymore. We are thus left in the strange, ambiguous state of a "post-orgy" world, wondering what sex is even supposed to be about in a postmodern, late capitalist world: "The orgy is over, liberation is over. . . . After a culture based on prohibition . . . this is a culture based on the questioning of one's own definition: 'Am I sexed? What sex am I? . . . Liberation has left everyone in an undefined state. . . . This is why there's so much love-making."[8] This is much the same question, I think, that Crowley was asking himself in his latter days, as he sank deeper into heroin addiction: after all, what is there left to do after you have transgressed every social taboo and indulged every forbidden desire?

To answer this question, I would suggest that the literature on sexual magic still has much to teach us today and, above all, forces us to rethink the relationship between the ideal of sexual liberation and the possibility of actual social and political transformation.

SEXUAL LIBERATION AND THE DEATH OF GOD: THE AMBIVALENT LEGACY OF SEXUAL MAGIC IN THE MODERN WORLD

> The Ego is desire, so everything is ultimately desired and undesirable, desire is ever a preliminary forecast of terrible dissatisfaction hidden by its ever-present vainglory. The millennium will come and quickly go. Men will be greater than the Gods they ever conceived—there will be greater dissatisfaction. You are ever what you were but you may be so in a different form!
>
> AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE, *The Book of Pleasure*

The case of Crowley, and really all of the figures discussed in this book, is strong evidence that the rise of sexual magic in the West is not simply a reactionary countercultural rebellion against modern Western society; on the contrary, the rise of sexual magic reflects, embodies, and often exaggerates many of the central themes and contradictions within modernity as a whole. These themes include radical individualism, an ideal of progress toward a utopian new world, and the identification of sexuality as the most profound aspect of human existence, even "the secret" of our psyches and the key to social well-being.

As Michel Foucault has argued, the rise of sexuality as a central and defining category is closely linked to the declining power of traditional religious institutions in modern Western society: "the emergence of sexuality in our culture is . . . tied to the death of God and to the ontological void which is his death fixed at the limit of thought."[9] Today, we no longer have easy access to ecstatic, liberating experiences of mystical union or annihilation of the ego in the divine abyss, as did St. Teresa of Ávila, Meister Eckhart, or Marguerite Porete. Today, the experience of transgression and the radical overstepping of the boundaries of the self is found primarily in sex:

> The sacred, itself a staging ground of transgression . . . is not so much *erased* by modernity, as is suggested by the famous notion of the disenchantment of the world, but is instead itself *transgressed*. Paradoxically, this transgression of transgression can be viewed as the ultimate sacred act but one in which *sacrilege* becomes the place where the sacred is most likely to be experienced in modernity. . . . [T]his charged space of transgression in modernity is sex . . . located not in God but in his absence.[10]

The literature on sexual magic would seem to be the quintessential expression of this new kind of transgression: for sexual magic is precisely a matter of harnessing the most this-worldly, sensual, and even "sacrilegious" power of sexual union for spiritual ends. And for many of our sexual magicians, particularly for Crowley, Spare, and their successors, this demanded the death of the old, obsolete God of the Christian West and the birth of something radically new.

In this sense, the rise of sexual magic in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries embodies a deep ambivalence and an inherent tension, one that gives us insight into the ambivalent tensions surrounding sexuality in our own world today. All of the figures discussed in this book emphasized the links between sexual liberation and sociopolitical liberation, the ways in which sexual freedom could help lead to the birth of a more equal social system and even a new political order. From P. B. Randolph's spiritualist utopia to the neo-pagans' feminism, to the chaos magicians' postmodern anarchy, the breaking down of sexual taboos has been consistently tied to an ideal of larger collective freedom. And many of the sexual magicians, such as Randolph, Gerald Gardner, Starhawk—even Crowley to a certain degree—were in fact important historical figures in the promotion of broader social freedoms.

As we have seen throughout this book, one of the most central elements in this ideal of sexual and political liberation is the power of transgression the deliberate violation of sexual taboos with the larger aim of overstepping larger social norms. As one enthusiastic contemporary magician proclaims, the power of sexual magic itself lies in the liberating, godlike power of transgression:

> The greatest orgasm is often attained during times of great risk. What could be riskier than breaking a great taboo? . . . [T]he greatest joy, insight, power and, yes, orgasm, is the child of those sexual acts which violate sacred, cultural and religious taboos. . . . In this primitive dream is there not something of Sex Magick? Is not God and Sex unified in the same scene?[11]

In many ways, the history of modern sexual magic is a history of progressively more extreme sexual and social transgression. Thus, Theodor Reuss and Aleister Crowley suggested masturbation, homosexuality, and even bestiality; Gardner used nudity and flogging; Anton Szandor LaVey exulted in every variety of sexual fetish; and the chaos magicians employ any and all means of transgression in order to overstep the boundaries of reality and society alike.

Finally, one of the outspoken advocates of this ideal of sexual transgression and sociopolitical transformation was Maria de Naglowska, the Russian-born Satanist and translator of Randolph's *Magia Sexualis.*[12] Indeed, Naglowska would create her own "seminary" in Paris, called "La Flèche d'Or," dedicated to training men and women in the art of (often violent) sexual magic. Many of Naglowska's rites involved extreme acts of sexual and social transgression, such as the "mystery of hanging," in which the male was first sexually aroused and hung until he passed out, at which point the female would position herself on his asphyxia-induced erection. The noose around his throat would then be released, and he would experience the "explosive penetration of the resplendent woman at the sublime moment of holy coitus."[13] Yet, like Crowley, Reuss, and others before her, Naglowska had in mind a much larger goal of social transformation, indeed the dawn of a new era of history. This Third Era, the Era of the "Mother," would succeed the previous eras of the "Father" and the "Son" by unleashing the power of sexuality and Woman: "Sex magic was seen to exercise not only a personal initiatory transformation on the couples who practiced it, but a much larger social effect. . . . The world-changing force . . . was 'feminine power' which she believed would emanate from a new kind of spiritually and sexually advanced woman."[14] In sum, the sexual magicians have repeatedly sought to overthrow the existing social order by systematically transgressing the sexual norms upon which that order is based.

Yet, at the same time, we have also seen throughout this book that sexual magic—like sexuality itself in the modern period—has also been tied to less noble sorts of social and political agendas. If Randolph saw in sexual magic a hope for social utopia and women's rights, others like Julius Evola linked his magic to a far more extreme, even fascistic political program. If feminist witches like Starhawk found in sexual magic a form of female liberation and empowerment, others like Crowley and LaVey practiced a rather chauvinistic and misogynistic form of magic.

Finally, like sexuality itself in the modern West, sexual magic has a consistent tendency to become commodified, commercialized, and fetishized in Western consumer culture. In this sense, one could argue that sexuality has been subjected to much the same process of fetishization that Marx sees at work in the phenomenon of commodity fetishism in modern capitalism.[15] Like money and commodities in the capitalist system, sex too has been endowed with a mysterious, magical, even godlike power in Western society since the nineteenth century. As we have seen throughout this book, sexuality has since the nineteenth century been increasingly identified as the innermost essence or core of the human being, the most powerful force in life, and the key to social harmony: "The logic of sex is the key to personal identity in our time. Our sexuality reveals us to ourselves and our desire to have this secret self-knowledge drives us to engage in discourse on our sexuality."[16] Above all, sex has repeatedly been linked to the hope for social liberation, political transformation, and the creation of a utopian new world. As Dennis Altman observes, "Suggestions that the sexual is political can be found in a range of nineteenth century philosophical writings, but became central for a number of twentieth century thinkers, whether like Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse they drew on the theories of Freud, or, as in the case of many second-wave feminists, they were consciously hostile to psychoanalysis."[17] Yet, as we see in the remarkable proliferation of pornography, the use of sexually explicit imagery in advertising and throughout the media, the promise of "sexuality liberation" has also clearly been successfully co-opted by commercial consumerism and transformed into an extremely lucrative sex industry within the new global economy:

> The mainstreaming of pornography . . . reflects the more general sexualization of marketing. The use of "sexy bodies" . . . in advertising and mainstream newspapers . . . has become ubiquitous, and with it the creation of a homogeneity of desire through global advertising campaigns and interchangeable glossy magazines.[18]

Marcuse himself realized this in 1966, when his ideal of sexual liberation had clearly begun to be co-opted and absorbed by the logic of consumer society and divested of most of its political potential. Instead, Marcuse concluded, sexuality has been subjected to a "repressive desublimation,"[19] in which the very rhetoric of freedom and liberation is exploited to sell cars and cigarettes, to elect politicians, and to provide citizens with an illusion of freedom within an increasingly oppressive capitalist system:

> In the affluent society, the authorities are hardly forced to justify their dominion. They deliver the goods; they satisfy the sexual and the aggressive energy of their subjects. As the affluence of society depends increasingly on the uninterrupted production and consumption of waste, gadgets, planned obsolescence, means of destruction, the individuals have to be adapted to these requirements. . . . Scientific management of instinctual needs has long since

> become a vital factor in the reproduction of the system: merchandise which has to be bought and used is made into objects of the libido.[20]

If one were to adopt a Marxist critique, one might well argue that the literature on sexual magic has taken this dual process of sexual fetishism and commodity fetishism to a whole new extreme. Virtually all of the literature on the subject—from the works of Randolph down to the chaos magicians and cyberpagans—consistently tends to fetishize both sex and the promise of sexual liberation. Sex is "God power" (Randolph), the most powerful "scientific secret" of Magick (Crowley), and the "greatest magical force in nature" (Evola), heralding a "New Gospel of Salvation of Sexual Religion" (Reuss). Still more striking, however, is the fact that many of the figures in this book explicitly linked their sexual practice to the magical power of generating money, wealth, and material benefits. As we saw in the case of Crowley, Randolph, and many contemporary magicians, sex is not only fetishized as the innermost essence of human nature; it is also endowed with a magical power to obtain anything one desires, including money and material goods—even Mac laptops, as Tantric goddess "Sexy Witch" promises. In other words, if capitalism endows commodities with a kind of "magical" and mystical aura, and if modern Western culture endows sexuality with a magical, liberating power, then the sex magicians have simply made the logical step of *putting the two together in one magical process.*

In sum, the literature on sexual magic contains a deep tension and profound ambivalence. If it is true that the practice of sexual magic opens the possibility for new kinds of individual and social liberation, it also makes possible new forms of gender, political, and economic exploitation—the exploitation of women, the exploitation of desire through the logic of consumption, or the exploitation of "transgression" itself as a new kind of marketable commodity. Yet this only reflects and really helps to highlight the deeply ambivalent experience of sexuality today in our twenty-first-century American context—our own hopes of political freedom and the recurring tendency of sexuality to become exploited by the logic of the market. As Foucault observes, "Liberations open up new relationships of power, which have to be controlled by practices of liberty." And therefore, particularly in the case of sexuality, we need constantly to ask ourselves the larger ethical question about our liberations: "is it obvious that in liberating one's desires one will know how to behave ethically in pleasurable relationships with others?"[21] So, too, we might ask: Is it the case that sexual magic, with its promise of transgression and liberation, necessarily leads to positive social or political change?

THE FIGHT FOR EROS: SEXUAL MAGIC AND THE SEARCH FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIBERATION

> Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the political fight.
> HERBERT MARCUSE, Political Preface 1966, in *Eros and Civilization*

> We need to consider the possibility that one day, perhaps in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex, so that we became dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest of confessions from a shadow.
> MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1

Here I would suggest that the literature on sexual magic ultimately forces us to critique, modify, and move beyond the model of sexuality and power suggested by authors like Foucault. While I have drawn upon Foucault's method of genealogy and his *History of Sexuality* throughout this book, I do think these have serious limitations, particularly if we want to think in terms of some larger social or political transformation. As various authors have observed, Foucault's analysis of sexuality leaves several lingering problems and unanswered questions. As Judith Butler suggests, we therefore need to read Foucault against himself, that is, to use Foucault's own methods of historical criticism to challenge some of his deeper assumptions.[22]

As many feminist critics have observed, one of the most troubling problems with Foucault's view of sexuality is the question of women and his general "gender-blindness." As we have seen throughout this book, there is a recurring tension within the sex magic literature itself concerning the status of women. While some like Randolph were quite ahead of their time in imagining new roles and power for women, others like Crowley, Reuss, Evola, and LaVey were remarkably old-fashioned and often downright misogynistic. Even within the Wiccan and neo-pagan traditions—which would seem on the surface to be the most empowering for women—there is an ironic tendency to reaffirm very stereotyped gender roles (women are from the moon, men are from the sun, etc.). Sexual magic is not *inherently* liberating, particularly for women. Indeed, it can just as often be used in the service of patriarchy and misogyny. Thus, if we are to understand the complex relations between sexuality and power in these traditions, we also need to look closely at the complex, often ambivalent gender dynamics that lie at their very core.

The second larger question with which Foucault leaves us is just what, if any, hope is there for escaping the relations of power and domination within which we are all enmeshed, particularly in late capitalist consumer society? As various critics have observed, Foucault is ultimately quite pessimistic and without much hope for any real kind of macrolevel social change. Many feminist critics, in particular, have been unhappy with Foucault's seemingly hopeless view of power and domination, which presents a model of sexuality and bio-power that seems to leave little hope of positive transformation:

> Foucault calls only for resistance and exposure of the system of power relations. Moreover, he is often vague about what exactly this means. . . . Perhaps this stress on resistance rather than transformation is due to Foucault's profound pessimism. Power appears to him as ever expanding and invading. It may even attempt to annex the counter-discourses that have developed. . . . [T]o even imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system.[23]

Instead, as Butler has argued, sex need not always be seen as "constructed in regulatory and reproductive ways"; rather, it can also be used in creative, performative ways that subvert those mechanisms of sexual regulation.[24] What we need now is not just to resist power relations on a local level, but to transform them in more radical ways. Above all, we need to focus on the agency of oppressed and dominated groups—women, for example—who are not mere passive objects constructed by history, but active agents capable of making history as well:

> [A]s an engaged vision, the understanding of the oppressed exposes the relations among people as inhuman and thus contains a call to political action. . . . A theory of power for women, for the oppressed, is not one that leads to a turning away from engagement but rather one that is a call for change and participation in altering power relations.[25]

Here I would like to offer a few of my own suggestions for more productive ways to move beyond the pessimistic impasse in which Foucault seems to leave us. Most importantly, I would suggest that the literature on sexual magic does in fact contain a valuable ideal of personal freedom, political transformation, and social equality that we can learn much from today, but it needs to be linked more concretely to real, material, and practical kinds of social, political, and economic justice. As Altman persuasively argues, there are still elements of the ideal of sexual liberation that are worth salvaging. Sexual and social liberation are indeed linked in complex ways. The key point, however, is that sexual freedom does not *by itself* magically bring social or political freedom. Rather, social, economic, and political freedoms provide the necessary context in which any sort of genuine sexual freedom can meaningfully exist.

> Maybe the pseudo-Reichianism of sexual liberation is now suspect, but there is something in its project worth saving, especially the stress on the interconnection between sexual and social justice. If there really is none, then why is sexual repression so central to both organized religion and most authoritarian regimes? . . .
>
> Perhaps we should turn the precepts of the seventies around, and recognize not just that sexual freedom is connected to other struggles, but that it is meaningless in the absence of other forms of freedom and equality. Only if women are empowered in the economic and social sphere can they engage equally with men in the sexual arena, and for this to happen does require, as we claimed in those halcyon days of liberation politics, revolutionary change.[26]

In other words, we need first to work hard in a very material way to create gender and economic equality—to fight for women's rights, gay rights, and social justice—if we want to create a space in which sexual freedom can flourish. In the absence of material and economic equality, the rhetoric of "sexual freedom" is, at best, a hollow promise and, at worst, a mask for new forms of sexual objectification and exploitation.

But this is precisely why a serious reflection on the tradition of *magia sexualis* is so important for our own era. Figures like Reuss, Gardner, Crowley, and the rest were grappling with many of the very same issues with which we still grapple today, and they foresaw our own cultural tensions in remarkably prescient ways. As such, they have much to teach us about both the promise and the problematic nature of sexuality in our own world.

To close, I would like to return to the figure with whom I began this book, P. B. Randolph, arguably the first and most influential figure in the history of modern sexual magic. Unlike many of the individuals we've encountered in this book, Randolph was never simply a sexual magician but was in fact also an active abolitionist and an outspoken advocate of women's rights. In his case, sexual freedom was linked in a very practical way to work in the realm of social justice and gender equality, as he fought for the "full enjoyment and enfranchised manhood" of African-Americans and cried out on behalf of the "struggling millions of the disenfranchised demanding Justice."[27] For Randolph, the power of spiritual love, sex, and marriage was not simply a means of generating income or attaining worldly power, but was also a way to help usher in a new age "in which peace on earth would prevail and all men could meet . . . without distinction of color, sex or money."[28] In sum, many of our sexual magicians have indeed played important roles in the positive advances made toward larger social and political freedoms over the last 150 years, but they have done so most effectively when their magical efforts were combined with more concrete forms of social and political action. In this respect, I would suggest that Randolph was not only one of the most original figures in the history of modern sexual magic but also the one who still has the most to teach us about its potential for social and political change as well.

Perhaps the final lesson we have to learn from King Lamus and the rest of the sexual magicians is this: If there is a "magic" in sex, it may not lie so much in the possibility of generating income, enchanting straying lovers, or bringing spontaneously gifted Mac laptops; rather, it may lie in the *hope* of creating a more equal, fair, and free society that benefits men and women of all ethnicities and sexual orientations. Such a hope may well be "magical" in the sense that it is ultimately utopian and never perfectly attainable. But it is one that is no less worthy of fighting for and striving toward.

Notes

PREFACE

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2. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 4.

3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 33.

4. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), pp. 124–25, 311–12.

5. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Magia Sexualis*, translated by Maria de Naglowska (Paris: Robert Telin, 1931). There is also an English translation by Robert North (*Sexual Magic* [New York: Magickal Childe, 1988]). Some have claimed that de Naglowska fabricated the entire text; however, it is clear that most of the book is taken from Randolph's various writings and that only a few portions were added from other sources. See John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), p. 364.

INTRODUCTION

1. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study* (London: F. A. Davis, 1892 [1886]). For discussions of Krafft-Ebing and similar works of the period, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978); and Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, vol. 2, *The Tender Passion* (New York: Oxford, 1986), pp. 223ff.

2. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1; cf. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981); Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University, 1994).

3. See Francis King, *Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1971); Ioan P. Coulianu, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

4. On sexual imagery in Kabbalah, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995); Moshe Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Practice in the Kabbalah," in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). On Swedenborg, see Marsha Keith Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Swedenborg, Blake, and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision," *Esoterica* 2 (2000): 45–93; and Schuchard, "Emanuel Swedenborg: Deciphering the Codes of a Celestial and Terrestrial Intelligencer," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, edited by Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), pp. 177–208.

5. On Randolph, see John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997); Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel, and John Deveney, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1995); see also Hugh B. Urban, "The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and Its Impact on Modern Western Esotericism." *Esoterica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 3 (2001): 218–259.

6. See Hugh B. Urban, "The Cult of Ecstasy: Tantrism, the New Age, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism," *History of Religions* 39 (2000): 268–304; and Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

7. See Jon Hughes, *Celtic Sex Magic: For Couples, Groups, and Solitary Practitioners* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2002); Jennifer Hunter, *Wicca for Lovers: Spells and Rituals for Romance and Seduction* (New York: Viking Press, 2001); Judy Kuriansky, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex* (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2001).

8. Donald Michael Kraig, *Modern Sex Magick: Secrets of Erotic Spirituality* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998), p. xvii. Another recent example of this melding of Western magic and Tantra is Nikolas and Zeena Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh: The Complete Guide to Left Hand Path Sex Magic* (New York: Creation Books, 2002).

9. Margo Anand, *The Art of Sexual Magic: Cultivating Energy to Transform Your Life* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), p. 1.

10. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *The Ansairetic Mystery: A New Revelation Concerning Sex!* (Toledo, OH: Toledo Sun, Liberal Printing House, n.d. [ca.1873]), in Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, pp. 315–16.

11. Aleister Crowley, *The Vision and the Voice* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1911), pp. 385–86.

12. See Antoine Faivre, ed. *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996). Hanegraaff makes only the briefest mention of Crowley in *New Age Religion*, as does Daniel van Egmond in his essay "Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, edited by Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 311–46.

13. King, *Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion*, pp. 3–9.

14. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell, 1989), p. 12. See Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), p. 9.

15. Malcolm Waters, *Daniel Bell* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 132.

16. Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 169.

17. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, p. 423. As Faivre similarly observes, "The industrial revolution naturally gave rise to an increasingly marked interest in the 'miracles' of science. . . . Along with smoking factory chimneys came both the literature of the fantastic and the new phenomenon of spiritualism" ("What Is Occultism?" in *Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult*, edited by Lawrence Sullivan [New York: Macmillan, 1989], p. 7).

On the links between the rise of occultism and modernity, see Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Bradford Verter, "Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800–1950" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1997).

18. Jeremy R. Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporeality and Political Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 82. "[T]he emergence of sexuality in our culture is . . . tied to the death of God and to the ontological void which is his death fixed at the limit of thought" (Michel Foucault, "Preface to Transgression," in *Religion and Culture*, edited by Jeremy R. Carrette [New York: Routledge, 1999], p. 70).

19. Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autobiography*, edited by John Symonds (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), pp. 873, 939.

20. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *The Mysteries of Eulis* (1860), reproduced in Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, pp. 339–40. See also Randolph, *Eulis! The History of Love: Its Wondrous Magic, Chemistry, Rules, Laws, Modes, and Ra-*

tionale; Being the Third Revelation of Soul and Sex (Toledo, OH: Randolph, 1874).

21. Randolph, *Ansairetic Mystery*, p. 319. "Magic is a science. It is the only science which occupies itself, theoretically and practically, with the highest forces of nature, which are occult. It declares and proves that the universe . . . is subject to certain fluid influences and that science can prove this" (Randolph, *Sexual Magic* [New York: Magickal Childe, 1988], p. 59).

22. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *The Wonderful Story of Ravalette* (Boston: Randolph, 1876), p. 243.

23. Franklin Rosemont, foreword to Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, p. xv.

24. On this point see Hugh B. Urban, "The Beast with Two Backs: Aleister Crowley, Sex Magic, and the Exhaustion of Modernity," *Nova Religio* 7, no. 3 (2004): 7–25; and Urban, "Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra, and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England," *Esoterica* 5 (2003): 138–92.

25. Tara, "Sex Magick: The Key to Personal Liberation," in *Modern Sex Magick: Secrets of Erotic Spirituality*, by Donald Michael Kraig (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998), pp. 213, 214.

26. Nik Douglas, *Spiritual Sex: Secrets of Tantra from the Ice Age to the New Millennium* (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), p. 315.

27. See Urban, "Cult of Ecstasy."

28. See Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1; and Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

29. The term *sexuality* first entered the English vocabulary through an 1892 translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's classic work on sexual deviance (*Psychopathia Sexualis*). See Angus McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History* (London: Blackwell, 1999), p. 224n.

30. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 69.

31. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, p. 117. See also Mason, *Making of Victorian Sexuality.*

32. McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality*, p. 1.

33. Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 105.

34. See Wilhelm Reich, *Selected Writings: An Introduction to Orgonomy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 1973), p. 185. See also Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, p. 57; Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1987), pp. 23–24.

35. Altman, *Global Sex*, p. 160. See especially Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 197–211.

36. Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 15.

37. Lois McNay, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 1994), pp. 164–65.

38. Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 22.

39. Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 8.

40. Ibid., pp. 28, 43.

41. See Steven Seidman, *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830–1980* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 7–8. In Randolph's words, "I truly believe that if my rules were followed the social millennium would be close at hand" (*Eulis!* p. 107).

42. See Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986); and Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 2, *The History of Eroticism* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

43. See Aleister Crowley, *The Law Is for All: The Authorized Popular Commentary on Liber AL sub figura CCXX, The Book of the Law* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1996); Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Urban, "Beast with Two Backs."

44. See Doreen Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (Blaine, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1978); Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Sex, Magic, and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

45. See Peter J. Carroll, *Liber Kaos* (New York: Weiser, 1992); and Carroll, *Psybermagick: New Adventures in Chaos Magic* (New Falcon, 1997); Robert Anton Wilson, *Sex, Drugs, and Magic* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1993).

46. Altman, *Global Sex*, p,160.

47. Godwin, Chanel, and Deveney, *Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, p. 273.

48. See Verter, "Dark Star Rising," chap. 4.

49. See Urban, "Cult of Ecstasy." On late capitalism, see especially Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*.

50. Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan, eds., *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 5. Just in the last few years, several volumes have appeared on religion and popular culture; see Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum, eds., *Religion and Popular Culture: Studies on the Interaction of Worldviews* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2001); Marjorie Garber and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds., *One Nation Under God? Religion and American Culture* (New York; Routledge 1999).

51. Fredric Jameson, "On Cultural Studies," in *A Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 614–45. See also Susan Mizruchi, ed., *Religion and Cultural Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

52. Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, no. 3 (1996): 225. See Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

53. Bryan Turner, *Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (New York; Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 2. See Altman, *Global Sex*, pp. 54–55.

54. Jean Starobinski, "A Short History of Body Consciousness," *Humanities in Review* 1 (1982): 38.

55. See Urban, "Cult of Ecstasy," and Urban, *Tantra.*

56. "Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things. . . . Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species. . . . On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain events in their dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or the complete reversals—the errors . . . and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us" (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 81).

57. De Naglowska (1883–1936) is worthy of a more detailed treatment than I can give her here. Born to a military family in Russia, she became involved in occult-artistic circles and was exiled to Rome; there she allegedly became romantically involved with Italian esotericist Julius Evola (see chapter 5). De Naglowska later founded a seminary in Paris called "La Flèche d'Or," where she expounded her utopian vision of a coming new age of the Mother to be achieved largely through the practice of sexual magic. See her works: *La Lumière du sexe: rituel d'initation satanique* (Paris, 1932); "Le rite sacré de l'amour magique," Supplément de *La Flèche, Organe d'Action Magique* (Paris, 1932): 16–18; Julius Evola, *The Metaphysics of Sex* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1983), pp. 261–63.

58. See Hugh B. Urban, "The Extreme Orient: The Construction of 'Tantrism' in the Orientalist Imagination," *Religion* 29 (1998): 123–46; and Urban, *Tantra*, chap. 2.

59. Arthur Lyons, *The Second Coming: Satanism in America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), p. 1.

60. On late capitalism, see Jameson, *Postmodernism;* Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity;* and Urban, "Cult of Ecstasy."

61. See McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality*, p. 1; Altman, *Global Sex*, pp. 1–51.

62. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, p. 69.

63. Jean Baudrillard, *America* (New York: Verso, 1988), p. 4.

1. THE RECURRING NIGHTMARE, THE ELUSIVE SECRET

1. Robert Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 22.

2. David Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity: Satanic Ritual Abuse, Gnostic Libertinism and Primal Murders," *History of Religions* 40, no. 4 (2001): 352–80; and Frankfurter, *The Organization of Evil: Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Atrocity in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, forthcoming); Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Chatto, 1975).

3. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 141. On Satanic "inversions" in medieval demonology, see also Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), pp. 83–85.

4. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: New American Library, 1974), p. 357. As Frankfurter observes, much of the study of religion in the twentieth century is colored by this preoccupation with ritual transgression and sexual excess ("Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity").

5. Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 88.

6. Narendranath Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion* (Delhi: Manohar, 1982), p. ix.

7. Don Webb, "A Sex Magic Primer," Networked Interzones, www.altx.com/interzones2/violet/sex.magic.html (1995).

8. Nik Douglas, *Spiritual Sex: Secrets of Tantra from the Ice Age to the New Millennium* (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), pp. 25–26.

9. I have engaged in a fairly extensive critique of Eliade's and Bhattacharyya's views of Tantra in relation to their personal and political lives in Hugh Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chap. 6. See also Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity."

10. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons,* p. 259. See Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity."

11. Charles Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), p. 14.

12. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 67.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., pp. 150–51.

15. Marvin W. Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. 63–64. For a good critique of scholarship on the Dionysian cults, see Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity."

16. William Arrowsmith, trans., *Euripides V* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 34–36.

17. Ibid., pp. 470–73, 1109–41.

18. Livy, *Ab urbe condita,* 39.8, translated by Heny Bettenson, *Livy: Rome and the Mediterranean* (New York: Penguin, 1976).

19. Ibid., 39.15.

20. Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas,* vol. 1, *From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 365.

21. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons,* p. 11.

22. Justin, *I Apology,* 14, quoted in Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), pp. 58–59.

23. Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent,* p. 58.

24. Ibid., p. 81; cf. Brown, *Body and Society,* p. 85.

25. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons,* p. 15.

26. Minucius Felix, *Octavius,* chaps. 9 and 10, cited in Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons,* p. 1.

27. Brown, *Body and Society,* p. 140, citing Justin, *I Apologia,* 29.2.

28. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. xix–xx. According to the Gnostic teacher Monoimus, "Abandon the search for God and the creation and other matters. . . . Look for him by taking yourself as the starting point. . . . Learn the sources of sorrow, joy, love, hate. . . . If you carefully investigate these matters you will find him in yourself" (Hippolytus, *Refutationis Omnium Heresium* 8.15.1–2, in Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels,* pp. xix–xx).

29. *Gospel of Thomas* 1, translated in James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 118.

30. *Gospel of Philip* 70, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library,* p. 142. See Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 245–46. Some recent scholars like April DeConick have argued that the Valentinians actually did practice a form of mystical sexual union that mirrors the union of the soul and its heavenly counterpart ("The Passion of Psyche: Marriage and Gnostic Spirituality in Early Valentinian Gnosis" [paper presented at the "Hidden Intercourse" conference, Esalen Institute, California, April 4–9, 2005]).

31. *Gospel of Philip* 61, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library,* p. 137. "The human being has intercourse with the human being. The horse has intercourse with the horse, the ass with the ass. . . . If you are born a human being, it is [the human being] who loves you. . . . If you become one of those who belong above, it is those who belong above will rest in you" (*Gospel of Philip,* pp. 78–79).

32. *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* 13–14, 16, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library,* pp. 272–74.

33. Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels,* pp. 60–61. On the social and gender equality in the Gnostic sects and their tendency to "undermine the traditional religious institutions of the polis," see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 174–78.

34. Tertullian, *De praescriptione haeraticorum,* translated as *The Shield of Catholic Faith, or Tertullian's Prescriptions* (Dublin: J. Coyne, 1823), 41.2–6.

35. Brown, *Body and Society,* p. 116.

36. *Gospel of Philip* 69, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library,* p. 141.

37. Brown, *Body and Society,* p. 118.

38. Stephen Harr, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), pp. 305ff. Harr does, however, acknowledge that it is "likely that Simon advocated a freedom that ostensibly included sexual intercourse and promiscuity that didn't exclude incest" (*Simon Magus,* p. 305).

39. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata,* III, 10, 1; translated by H. Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954).

40. Irenaeus, quoted in Rudolph, *Gnosis,* pp. 249–50. Similarly St. Augus-

tine accused the Manichaen elect of secret vices, such as eating "a kind of Eucharist including human sperm" (Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1998], p. 6).

41. Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 141.

42. Epiphanius, *Ancoratus und Panarion*, edited by K. Holl, 3 vols. (Leipzig, Germany: 1915, 1922, 1933), 26.4–8. For a good discussion of Epiphanius's account, see Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity."

43. On the Free Spirit, see Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, where he examines the common assumption that heresy was linked to fornication, arguing that this charge had little if any grounding in historical fact. According to one of the more outlandish charges, "They . . . supposedly maintained that if a man and a woman had sexual intercourse on an altar at the same time as the consecration of the host, both acts would have the same worth" (pp. 10–11).

44. Lambert, *Cathars*, p. 6.

45. Carol Lansing, *Purity and Power: Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 108.

46. According to one critic, "The sect of the Bogomils is very clever in aping virtue. . . . [T]heir wickedness is hidden under the cloak of virtue. A Bogomil looks gloomy and is covered up to the nose and walks with a stoop and mutters, but within he is an uncontrollable wolf" (quoted in Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948], p. 199).

47. Lansing, *Purity and Power*, p. 106.

48. Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization, 400–1500* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 89.

49. Ibid.

50. Lambert, *Cathars*, p. 121.

51. Lansing, *Purity and Power*, p. 108.

52. Donald Michael Kraig, *Modern Sex Magick: Secrets of Erotic Spirituality* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998), p. 4.

53. Helen Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights: Images of the Military Orders, 1128–1291* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1993), p. 102.

54. Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Templar: A New History* (Gloucestershire, U.K.: Sutton, 2001), p. 206; cf. Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 248–52.

55. Piers Paul Read, *The Templars* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 295–96; cf. Barber, *Trial of the Templars*, p. 67.

56. This argument was first made by Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) but was widely criticized as poor scholarship. However, it has been made in a more sophisticated way recently by Carlo Ginzburg. Based on his study of the witch trials of the Friuli region of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Ginzburg's argument is that there was in fact a shamanistic tradition of women known as *benandanti* believed to enter into trances, journey to other realms, and do battle with witches

in order to ensure fertility. These individuals were then identified and tried by the church as witches (Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* [New York: Penguin, 1991], pp. 158–66).

57. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons.* For a useful overview of the various theories of the witch persecutions, see Ginzburg, *Ecstasies,* pp. 1–24. Among the more important authors' texts are Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch Craze of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1969); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971); and more recently, Clark, *Thinking with Demons,* and Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons.*

58. Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions,* p. 90.

59. D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 1959), pp. 82–83. As Zika observed, "[W]itches began to be increasingly portrayed as women who sought to appropriate male sexuality and power for themselves and . . . to invert and pervert the proper gender and social order" (Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons,* p. 270).

60. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies,* p. 1.

61. *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger* (1486), translated by Montague Summers (1928; reprint, New York: Dover, 1971), part I, question VI.

62. Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum,* translated by E. A. Ashwin (1929; reprint, New York: Dover, 1988), p. 38.

63. Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 19.

64. Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Dialogus in tres libros divisus: Titulus est Strix, sive de ludificatione daemonum* (Bologna, Italy: Jeronimo de Benedictis, 1523), translated by Stephens, *Demon Lovers,* p. 95.

65. Translated by Stephens, *Demon Lovers,* p. 97.

66. Brown, *Body and Society,* pp. 114–15.

67. Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library,* pp. 300–301.

68. See Harr, *Simon Magus,* pp. 305ff. April DeConick has recently argued that the Valentinians did in fact engage in a kind of spiritual sexual union not unlike later Kabbalistic practices; but this is still a far cry far modern sexual magic ("The Passion of Psyche").

69. Christopher Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 5.

70. Ibid., pp. 27–29.

71. Ibid., p. 28.

72. See, for example, Marvin Meyer, ed., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1994), pp. 158–75; Claire Fanger, ed., *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), pp. 48–49; Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2000), chap. 5.

73. For classic works on Kabbalah, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New

York: Dorset Press, 1974); Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

74. In the words of the *Zohar,* "That is why the Torah reveals and conceals herself. With love she approaches her lover to arouse love within him" (Daniel Chanan Matt, trans., *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* [Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983], p. 124).

75. Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 81.

76. *Zohar* III, 81a–b; quoted in Wolfson, *Circle in the Square,* p. 96.

77. *Zohar,* III, 274. "On Sabbath night, at midnight when the wise consummate their conjugal unions . . . their souls are eager to ascend and behold the glory of the King. . . . These souls are there bathed in the spices of Paradise and behold all that is within their capacity to behold" (III, 389).

78. Moshe Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah," in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 205. As Idel has observed, this use of sexual intercourse to help bring a higher spiritual union, or *unio mystica,* does bear some resemblance to certain Indian Tantric techniques (which will be discussed in chapter 3). "In both cases, the sexual act must be performed in a very mindful manner; a certain mystical consciousness is attained alongside the corporeal act." But despite this general similarity, the two traditions are fundamentally different in crucial respects. For while the main goal in Kabbalah is still conception of a child, the goal in Tantric practice is not conception but divine union (pp. 205–6).

79. Gershom Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 126. For a critique of Scholem's work on this point, see Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity."

80. Scholem, *Kabbalah,* p. 284.

81. Frank, quoted in Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," p. 130.

82. Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 5.

83. Ficino, *De Amore,* VI, 10, translated by Ioan P. Coulianu in *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 87. For a slightly different translation, see Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love,* translated by Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publishers, 1985), p. 127.

84. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 151. See Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic,* pp. 75–84; Marsilio Ficino, *De triplic: vita,* translated by Charles Boer (*Marsilio Ficino: The Book of Life* [Irving, TX: Spring Publishers, 1980], pp. 86–183).

85. Coulianu, *Eros and Magic,* p. 88; cf. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium,* p. 128; Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 69.

86. Giordano Bruno, *De vinculis in genere,* in Bruno, *Cause, Principle, and Unity: Essays on Magic,* translated by Robert de Lucca and Richard J. Blakewell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 165.

87. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic,* p. 83. See also Couliano, *Eros and Magic,* p. 89–95.

88. On the origins of alchemy in Europe, see E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1957); Jack Lindsay, *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (London: Muller, 1970).

89. Jolande Jacobi, ed., *Paracelsus: Selected Writings* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 245. On Paracelsus's spiritual alchemy, see Dan Merkur, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystics Visions and Unions* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), pp. 263–64.

90. Julius Evola, *Metafisica del sesso.* (1969; translation, *The Metaphysics of Sex,* New York: Inner Traditions, 1983), p. 256.

91. Paracelsus, *The Aurora of the Philosophers,* translated by Arthur Edward Waite, in *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus* (Berkeley; Shambhala, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 65–66.

92. *De Virtute Imaginativa;* in Waite, *Hermetic and Alchemical Writings,* vol. 2, p. 7n. On Paracelsus's view of imagination and magic, see Jacobi, *Paracelsus: Selected Writings,* p. 307; Merkur, *Gnosis,* pp. 256–58; Yates, *Giordano Bruno,* pp. 150–51.

93. "Just as a magnet attracts visible objects, so too is a Body invisible attracted by the Imagination. . . . Imagination is greater than is generally said: for a woman who, during her pregnancy, imagines a learned wise man, such as Plato, or a warrior . . . so will she bear such children, similar to her imaginations" (*De Morbis Invisibilus;* in Hans Kayser, ed., *Schriften, Theophrasts von Hohenheim: Genannt Paracelsus* [Leipzig, Germany: Insel-Verlag, 1924], pp. 314–15).

94. The "overheated Imagination" of the female may easily be "stimulated to eject Sperma, out of which incubi and Succubi grow" (Paracelsus, *De Fertilitate,* in Franz Hartmann, ed., *The Life of Paracelsus, with the Substance of His Teachings* [San Francisco: Wizards, 1986], p. 91).

95. C. G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 137–38. See also Merkur, *Gnosis,* pp. 258–64.

96. The most interesting recent scholarship on Swedenborg is by Marsha Keith Schuchard, "Emanuel Swedenborg: Deciphering the Codes of a Celestial and Terrestrial Intelligencer," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in History of Religions,* edited by Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 1999), pp. 177–207; and Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Swedenborg, Blake, and the Sexual Basis of Religious Vision," *Esoterica* 2 (2000): 45–93.

97. Robert Rix, "William Blake and the Radical Swedenborgians," *Esoterica* 5 (2003): 115.

98. Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried," p. 52. On Swedenborg's mistresses, see William White, *Emanuel Swedenborg: His Life and Writings* (London: Simpkin-Marshall, 1868), pp. 53, 92.

99. Marsha Keith Schuchard, "Freemasonry, Secret Societies, and the Con-

tinuity of the Occult Tradition in English Literature" (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1975), pp. 236–37. Schuchard argues that, while associating with Jewish mystics in London, Swedenborg learned how to perform "the mystical Kabbalistic marriage within his mind, through the sublimation of his sexual energy into visionary energy" ("Why Mrs. Blake Cried," p. 52).

100. "Swedenborg described the difficult discipline required to control and manipulate the sexual energies. Despite the intensely erotic character of the images he visualized (while meditating upon the male and female Hebrew letters and sephiroth), he must not dissipate his sexual energies in masturbation, nocturnal emission, or premature ejaculation" (Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried," p. 52). See Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams,* translated by J. J. G. Wilkinson (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, l986), #200.

101. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Spiritual Diary,* translated by George Bush and James Buss (London: James Speirs, 1889), #4408. See also Swedenborg, *The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugial Love* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1938), pp. 70–129.

102. Swedenborg, *Delights of Wisdom,* p. 43.

103. Rix, "William Blake," p. 116. "That there is such [true] conjugial love . . . may indeed be acknowledged from the first state of love, when it is insinuating itself and entering into the heart of a young man and a maiden, that is, with those that are beginning to love one only of the sex and to desire her for a bride. . . . [T]he earliest love of marriage emulates love truly conjugial" (Swedenborg, *Delights of Wisdom*, p. 71).

104. William Blake, *Jerusalem,* 7.65–67, in David V. Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 150. See also John Beer, *Blake's Humanism* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1968), pp. 89–93.

105. Rix, "William Blake," p. 117. "It is the link between political and sexual repression that most closely approximates a staple in Blake's writing" (Rix, "William Blake," p. 117).

106. Morton Paley, *Energy and Imagination: The Development of Blake's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 16.

107. *America,* 15.19–26, in Erdman, *The Complete Poetry,* p. 57. See also Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1947), pp. 206–8.

108. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code,* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), pp. 311–12.

2. SEX POWER IS GOD POWER

1. Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 255.

2. John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997); Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment.* See also Hugh B. Urban,

"The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and Its Impact on Modern Western Esotericism," *Esoterica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 3 (2001): 218–59.

3. Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 450 n. 159. Antoine Faivre's edited volume, *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), makes no mention of Randolph, while his *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994) mentions him only once in passing (p. 94).

4. Angus McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History* (London: Blackwell, 1999), p. 224n.

5. Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 12.

6. See Steven Seidman, *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1803–1989* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 13–38.

7. Terry, *American Obsession*, p. 32.

8. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978), pp. 53–54. See Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study.* London: F. A. Davis, 1892

9. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, pp. 140–41.

10. Seidman, *Romantic Longings*, p. 36.

11. O. S. Fowler, *Love and Parentage* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1850), p. 69.

12. John Cowen, *The Science of a New Life* (New York: Cowan, 1871), p. 41.

13. R. T. Trall, *Sexual Physiology and Hygiene* (1866; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 234.

14. William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1865), p. 122.

15. Seidman, *Romantic Longings*, p. 27; see Sylvester Graham, *A Lecture to Young Men* (1834; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 59.

16. Graham, *Lecture to Young Men*, p. 24.

17. Ibid., p. 18.

18. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, The Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 10.

19. Louis Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 9.

20. Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), p. 4. See Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

21. Sears, *Sex Radicals*, p. 4. According to the *Oneida Community Handbook*, dated 1867: "Free love with us does not mean freedom to love to-day and leave tomorrow. . . . Our communities are families, as distinctly bounded and separated from promiscuous society as ordinary households. The tie that binds us together is as permanent and sacred . . . as that of marriage. . . . Commu-

nity of property extends as far as freedom of love" (Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, p. 72).

22. Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, p. 120.

23. Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 28–30. "It was no accident that free-love agitation emerged as a current in the same reform stream that included abolition of slavery; after all, women and slaves suffered from the same oppressor—the white male" (Sears, *Sex Radicals*, p. 5).

24. Braude, *Radical Spirits*, p. 4. See Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia* (Boston: Sanborn, Carter, Blazin; Portland, Blade & Carter, 1855), vol. 4, p. 267.

25. Sears, *Sex Radicals*, pp. 8–9.

26. Ibid., pp. 6–7.

27. *New York Times*, August 20, 1852, p. 2; August 17, 1855, p. 2; September 8, 1855, p. 2.

28. "Abolition was the central pivot of radicalism and reform of the era and was closely intertwined with spiritualism" (Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, p. 155).

29. H.H. Bell, *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Convention* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), pp. 21–22.

30. Ibid., p. 36.

31. Ibid., p. 42. See William Z. Foster, *Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), pp. 172–73.

32. *Chicago Tribune*, quoted in P. B. Randolph, *P. B. Randolph: The "Learned Pundit" and "Man with Two Souls," His Curious Life, Work, and Career* (Boston: Randolph, 1872), p. 16.

33. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Eulis! The History of Love: Its Wondrous Magic, Chemistry, Rules, Laws, Modes, Moods, and Rationale* (Toledo, OH: Randolph, 1874), p. 48.

34. Franklin Rosemont, foreword to Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, p. xv.

35. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 100.

36. Ibid., pp. 48, 218.

37. As Deveney explains, "The Nusa'iri or Ansaireh . . . are a nominally Muslim group living . . . in isolated areas in the mountains of northwest Syria and Latakia. . . . What has mainly set the Nusa'iris apart and made them the object of persecution and massacre by the orthodox Muslims . . . is the belief that they practiced pagan and Gnostic sexual rites" (*Paschal Beverly Randolph*, p. 211). Louis Massignon regarded them as offshoots of twelfth-century Isma'ilism. See "Les Nusayris," in Massignon, *Elaboration de l'Islam* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969), pp. 109–14.

38. In 1866 Edward E. Salisbury published "The Book of Sulaiman's First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing the Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion, by Sulaiman Effendi of 'Adamah, with Copious Extracts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 8 (1866): 227–308. According to this text, the practice of "conjugal com-

munion" is the indispensable requirement of every good Nusa'iri. The author omitted the details of this "communion" because their "whole significance is more impure than purifying."

39. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 169.

40. "To Newton's gravitation, the Austrian doctor Franz Anton Mesmer added the concept of 'Animal Gravity,' a force that works upon and in our bodies through substances more subtle than matter. . . . [H]e became convinced that he was able to harness this force and employ it for healing" (Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 151).

41. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Sexual Magic,* translated by Robert North (New York: Magickal Child, 1988), pp. 10–11.

42. Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph,* pp. 218–19.

43. Paschal Beverly Randolph, "The Mysteries of Eulis," in Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph,* pp. 339–40.

44. Ibid., p. 337.

45. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *The Ansairetic Mystery: A New Revelation Concerning Sex!* Toledo, OH: Toledo Sun, Liberal Printing House, n.d. (ca. 1873–74). Reprinted in Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph,* pp. 319–25.

46. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *After Death; or, Disembodied Man: The World of Spirits, Its Location, Extent, Appearance* (Boston: author, 1868), p. 143.

47. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 108. This use of the language of electricity is found in other Spiritualist authors: "spiritualists did more than use the electromagnetic telegraph as a convenient analogy to describe their invisible communications. The spirits themselves . . . claimed that spiritualist intercourse depended upon electricity" (Sears, *Sex Radicals,* p. 13).

48. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Magia Sexualis,* translated by Maria de Naglowska (Paris: Robert Telin, 1931), pp. 76–77.

49. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 126.

50. Randolph, *Ansairetic Mystery,* p. 325.

51. Ibid., p. 318.

52. *P. B. Randolph, The "Learned Pundit" and "Man with Two Souls": His Curious Life, Works, and Career: The Great Free-Love Trial* (Boston: Randolph, 1872), pp. 70. 71.

53. Ibid., p. 87.

54. Ibid., p. 95.

55. Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment,* p. 256.

56. Count de St. Leon (Randolph), *Love and Its Hidden History* (Boston: William White and Company, 1869), p. 117.

57. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 220.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Randolph, *Sexual Magic,* p. 47.

61. "Keep secret your magical intentions. Silence concentrates your forces and multiplies them. This is why, when you are entering into the preparation

period for an act of magic, you should . . . talk as little as possible" (Randolph, *Sexual Magic*, p. 47).

62. Ibid., p. 48.

63. Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 255–56.

64. Frederick Hollick, *The Marriage Guide; or, A Natural History of Generation* (New York: T. W. Strong, 1853), p. 183.

65. Seidman, *Romantic Longings*, p. 18.

66. Ibid., pp. 7–8.

67. Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 250.

68. Rosemont, foreword to Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, p. xv.

69. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 108.

70. Ibid., p. 107.

71. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Love! At Last! The Seven Magnetic Laws of Love* (Boston: Randolph, 1870), p. 32.

72. Randolph, *Eulis!* p. 106.

73. Marian Dennys, quoted in Randolph, *P. B. Randolph*, pp. 76–77.

74. Paschal Beverly Randolph, *The Immortality of Love: Unveiling the Secret Arcanum of Affectional Alchemy,* edited by R. S. Clymer (Quakertown, PA Beverly Hall, 1978), p. 169.

75. R. S. Clymer, "Introductory," in Randolph, *Immortality of Love*, p. xvii italics in the original.

76. Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, p. 252.

77. Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel, and John Deveney, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1995), p. 71.

78. Peter Davidson, "Symbolical Notes to First Degree," in Godwin, Chanel, and Deveney, *Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, p. 131.

79. "The Mysteries of Eros," in Godwin, Chanel, and Deveney, *Hermetic Brothood of Luxor*, p. 273–74.

80. Ibid., pp. 247–48.

81. Godwin, Chanel, and Deveney, *Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, p. 67.

3. THE YOGA OF SEX

1. Judy Kuriansky, *The Compete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex* (Indianapolis Alpha Books, 2001), p. 196.

2. Nikolas Schreck and Zeena Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh* (New York Creation Books, 2002), back cover advertisement.

3. See André Padoux, "A Survey of Tantrism for the Historian of Religions," *History of Religions* 20, no. 4 (1981): 345–60; Hugh Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chap. 1.

4. David Gordon White, *The Kiss of the Yogini: "Tantric Sex" in Its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

5. Elsewhere I have undertaken a more detailed comparison of Tantra and

Western magic: "The Power of the Impure: Transgression, Violence, and Secrecy in Bengali Sakta Tantra and Modern Western Magic," *Numen* 50, no. 3 (2003): 269–308.

6. See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899), and my discussion in Urban, *Tantra*, pp. 23–43.

7. Lynn Collins, "The Secret to Tantric Sex," *Cosmopolitan*, May 2000, 240: "The result is both an out of body bond with your partner plus very physical ecstatic orgasms. . . . Grab your guy and get ready for a trip toward erotic enlightenment."

8. Margo Anand, *The Art of Sexual Magic: An Inspirational Guide to Tantric Sex That Will Transform Your Life* (New York: Putnam, 1995), p. 2.

9. Schreck and Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh*, pp. 41, 141.

10. David Gordon White, ed., *Tantra in Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 9.

11. Douglas Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Srividya Sakta Tantrism in South India* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), p. xix. See Urban, *Tantra*, chap. 1.

12. Arthur Avalon, ed., *Kularnava Tantra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1965), II.4, II.117.

13. Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1979), p. 32. See Urban, "The Conservative Character of Tantra: Secrecy, Sacrifice, and This-Worldly Power in Bengali Sakta Tantra," *International Journal of Tantric Studies* 6, no. 1 (2002); and Alexis Sanderson "Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir," in *The Category of the Person*, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 190–216.

14. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, pp. 73–74.

15. See David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 198–99.

16. See Douglas Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Sakta Tantrism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 51–52.

17. There is at present some debate over the precise dates of Krishnananda's life, some placing him in the first half of the sixteenth century and others putting him in the latter part of that century; however, the most common opinion is that the *Tantrasara* was probably composed in Navadvipa sometime between 1585 and 1600. See Urban, "Conservative Character of Tantra"; S. C. Banerji, *Tantra in Bengal* (Delhi: Manohar, 1992), pp. 78–79; Pratapaditya Pal, *Hindu Religion and Iconology According to the Tantrasara* (Los Angeles: Vichitra Press, 1981).

18. "The Tantric's 'double norm,' whereby conventional Hindu Dharma is upheld for those not yet qualified for Tantric teaching serves . . . to reaffirm the status quo" (Brooks, *Secret of the Three Cities*, p. 24); cf. Sanderson, "Purity and Power."

19. Krishnananda Agamavagisha, *Brihat Tantrasara*, edited by Srirasikamohana Cattopadhyaya (Calcutta: Navabharata Publishers, 1996), p. 703.

20. Ibid., p. 694.

21. Ibid., p. 685.

22. Ibid., p. 703. On the consumption of sexual fluids, see White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, pp. 94–123.

23. "Indian traditions have always viewed sexual fluids, and most particularly the uterine or menstrual blood, as polluting powerful and therefore dangerous substances" (White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, p. 67); see also Sarah Caldwell, *Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence, and Worship of the Goddess Kali* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 114–22.

24. Agamavagisha, *Brihat Tantrasara*, p. 703. As Charles Malamoud points out, *ucchishta* is a term used in the Vedic sacrifice to refer to that portion of the victim that is left over once all the offerings have been made. Like leftovers generally in India, it is considered impure and polluting, but it is also considered to be the powerful "seed" that gives birth to the next sacrifice (Malamoud, *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India* [Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996], pp. 7–10).

25. Malamoud, *Cooking the World*, p. 704.

26. Ibid., p. 703.

27. Ibid., p. 697.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., pp. 21, 694. As Pal comments, "Krishnananda takes the attitude of an orthodox smarta Brahmin and categorically states that women and sudras have no right to mantra or diksa. In connection with kulacara rites, however, he reverses himself and quotes . . . tantras which declare that all women are to be regarded as parts of the Goddess" (*Hindu Religion and Iconology*, p. 17).

30. Brooks, *Secret of the Three Cities*, pp. 25–26.

31. Ibid., p. 70. See Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom*, p. 188.

32. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), pp. 6–7. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

33. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study* (London: F. A. Davis, 1892), p. 24.

34. Ibid., p. 29.

35. William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos* (London: Kinsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1817), vol. 1, p. 247.

36. Quoted in Arthur Avalon, *Principles of Tantra: The Tantratattva of Sriyukta Siva Candra Vidyarnava Bhattacarya Mahodaya* (Madras: Ganesh, 1960), pp. 3–5. On Orientalist views of Tantra, see Urban, *Tantra*, chap. 2.

37. Edmond Demaitre, *The Yogis of India* (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1937), pp. 222–23.

38. Edward Sellon, quoted in Francis King, *Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1971), p. 11. See Sellon, *The New Epicurean; or, The Delights of Sex Facetiously and Philosophically Considered in Graphic Letters Addressed to Young Ladies of Quality* (London: J. C. Houten, 1870).

39. Edward Sellon, *Annotations on the Sacred Writings of the Hindüs, Being an Epitome of Some of the Most Remarkable and Leading Tenets in the Faith of That People, Illustrating Their Priapic Rites and Phallic Principles* (London: 1865).

40. See Richard Francis Burton, trans., *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana; Translated from the Sanskrit* (London: Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, 1883); Kalayana Malla, *Ananga ranga: Stage of the Bodiless One; The Hindu Art of Love,* translated by F. F. Arbuthnot and Richard Francis Burton (New York: Medical Press of New York, 1964).

41. On Woodroffe, see Urban, *Tantra,* pp. 134–64; and Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra, and Bengal: "An Indian Soul in a European Body?"* (London: Curzon Press, 2001). Taylor argues that "Arthur Avalon" is not simply a pseudonym for Woodroffe, but is rather the joint creation of Woodroffe and a Bengali, Atal Behari Ghose, who helped him translate most of the texts.

42. "Tantra simply presents the Vedantik teachings in a symbolic form for the worshipper, to whom it prescribes the means whereby they may be realized in fact" (Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta* [New York: Dover, 1978], p. 587). Elsewhere, Avalon/Woodroffe provides a detailed comparison of the Catholic Mass and a Tantric ritual (*Principles of Tantra,* p. 63).

43. The best historical discussion of Kellner's life is Josef Dvorak, "Carl Kellner," *Flensburger Hefte* 63 (1998), reprinted online at http://user.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/sunrise/kellner.htm.

44. The connection of Kellner with Tantric teachers and with the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light was asserted in the journal *Oriflamme* in 1912. See Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 361; Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel, and John Deveney, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1995), pp. 422, 428. Some authors have identified the Hermetic Brotherhoods of Light and Luxor; see T. Allen Greenfield, "The Hermetic Brotherhood Revisited: Thoughts on the Antiquity and Continuity of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light," www.scarletwoman.org/scarletletter/v5n2/v5n2_hermetic.html.

45. There is some debate as to whether Kellner or Reuss was the founder of the OTO. Official OTO sources credit Kellner as the one who came up with the idea of the Orientalische Templer in 1895. Critics like Peter R. Koenig, however, claim that Reuss was the real founder; see Koenig, "The O.T.O. Phenomenon," *Theosophical History* 4, no. 3 (1992): 92–98; Koenig, "Theodor Reuss as Founder of Esoteric Orders," *Theosophical History* 4, nos. 6–7 (1993): 187–93; Ellic Howe and Helmut Möller, "Theodor Reuss: Irregular Freemasonry in Germany, 1900–1923," *Ars Quator Coronatorum* 91 (1978): 28–46.

46. August Weinholtz, *L'Acacia* 9 (1907): 387–88.

47. Howe and Möller, "Theodor Reuss." See also Howe and Möller, *Merlin Peregrinus: Vom Untergrund des Abendlandes* (Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen + Neumann, 1986).

48. See Shreck and Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh,* pp. 206–8.

49. Theodor Reuss, "Ancient Order of Oriental Templars," in *Der Grosse*

Theodor Reuss Reader, ed. Peter König (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 1997), p. 126.

50. Theodor Reuss, "Von den Geheimnissen der okkulten Hochgrade unseres Orderns: Ein Mannifesto des Gross-Orientes," in *Historische Ausgabe der Oriflamme* (Berlin: Verlag von Max Perl, 1904), p. 31; reproduced in König, *Der Grosse Theodor Reuss Reader*, p. 75.

51. *Jubilaeums-Ausgabe der Oriflamme* (1912), p. 21; reproduced in R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America* (Quakertown, PA: Rosicrucian Foundation, 1935–36), pp. 613–14.

52. Theodor Reuss, "Mysteria Mystica Maxima," *Jubilaeums-Ausgabe der Oriflamme* (1912): 21.

53. Carl Kellner, in *Jubilaeums-Ausgabe der Oriflamme* (September 1912): 22–23. See Kellner, *Yoga: Eine Skizze über den psycho-physiologischen Teil der alten indischen Yogalehre* (Munich: Druck von Kastner & Lossen, 1896). Dvorak, "Carl Kellner."

54. Peter Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo-Gnosis," Ordo Templi Orientis Phenomenon, www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/spermo.htm.

55. Howe and Möller, *Merlin Peregrinus*, p. 194.

56. Reuss, "Parsifal und das Enthüllte Grals-Geheimnis" (1914), reproduced in Peter Koenig, *Der Kleine Theodor Reuss Reader* (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 1993), p. 71.

57. Ibid., p. 72.

58. Theodor Reuss, *Lingam-Yoni* (Berlin: Verlag Willsson, 1906), introduction. This passage was also published in *Oriflamme* 5, no. 1 (1906): 33–34. Apart from the introduction, the text is largely a translation of Hargrave Jennings, *Phallism: A Description of the Worship of Lingam-Yoni . . . and Other Symbols Connected with the Mysteries of Sex Worship*, privately printed in London, 1889.

59. Theodor Reuss, "Introduction to Lingam-Yoni," *Oriflamme* 5, no. 1 (1906): 33.

60. Reuss, "Parsifal und das Enthüllte Grals-Geheimnis."

61. Francis King, *The Magical World of Aleister Crowley* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), p. 79.

62. Ibid.

63. Peter Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis: Early Years and Development," Ordo Templi Orientis Phenomenon, www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/early.htm; and Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo-Gnosis." Reuss found this interpretation of the Mass in a text by Le Clément de St-Marq: *L'Eucharistie* (Bilsen, Germany: 1906), reproduced in König, *Der Grosse Theodor Reuss Reader.*

64. Peter Koenig, "Anal Intercourse and the O.T.O.," Das OTO-Phaenomen, http://user.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/sunrise/xi. htm.

65. *Der Judenkenner* 7 (February 12, 1936), reproduced in Koenig, "Theodor Reuss," p. 188.

66. Koenig, "Early Years and Development."

67. Theodor Reuss, "The Gnostic Neo-Christians" (1917), reproduced in König, *Der Gross Theodor Reuss Reader.*

68. Theodor Reuss, *Oriflamme* (1912): 19–20.

69. Ibid., 20.

70. Muller von Hausen, *Die Geheimnisse der Weisen von Zion* (Charlottenburg, Germany: Verlag Auf Vorspoten, 1920), p. 165.

71. Howe and Möller, "Theodor Reuss"; see Robert Landmann, *Die Geschichte eines Berges* (Ascona, Germany: 1934), p. 142ff.

72. The Schrecks are particularly dismissive of Reuss: *Demons of the Flesh,* pp. 206–7.

73. For a more detailed comparison, see Urban, "Power of the Impure."

74. Nik Douglas, *Spiritual Sex: Secrets of Tantra from the Ice Age to the New Millennium* (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), p. 315.

75. Schreck and Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh,* pp. 9–10.

76. Reuss, *Lingam-Yoni,* p. 35.

77. Peter Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis: The McDonaldisation of Occulture," www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/mcdonald.htm.

78. *New York Times,* quoted in Douglas, *Spiritual Sex,* p. 195. On Pierre Arnold Bernard, see Urban, "The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and Its Impact on Modern Western Esotericism," *Esoterica: Journal of Esoteric Studies* 3 (2001): 218–59"; Bradford Verter, "Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800–1950," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1997), chap. 4.

79. Omar Garrison, *Tantra: The Yoga of Sex* (New York: Julian Press, 1964), pp. xxviii, xxvi.

80. This was released in 1993 as *Tantra: Indian Rites of Ecstasy,* directed by Nik Douglas; produced with Mick Jagger and Robert Fraser. Distributed by Mystic Fire, New York.

81. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *Tantra: The Supreme Understanding* (Poona, India: Rajneesh Foundation, 1975), p. 100.

82. Kuriansky, *Complete Idiot's Guide,* pp. 8, 9.

83. Ibid., p. 7.

84. Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo-Gnosis."

4. THE BEAST WITH TWO BACKS

1. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman's volume *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) makes no reference to Crowley; Faivre makes very brief reference to Crowley in *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 91, 94, 97, 106. Wouter Hanegraaff's *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998) makes only passing reference to Crowley. Among the few serious treatments of Crowley are Stoddard Martin, *Orthodox Heresy: The Rise of "Magic" as Religion and Its Relation to Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Ronald Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). More recently, there is Bradford Verter's

"Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism, 1800–1950" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1997); and Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

2. Crowley uses the spelling *magick* to distinguish his art—the art of changing nature in accordance with one's Will—from vulgar understandings of the term. See Crowley, *The Law Is for All: The Authorized Popular Commentary on Liber AL sub figura CCXX, The Book of the Law* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1996), p. 39; Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice* (Paris: Lecram, 1929).

3. "The Wickedest Man in the World," *John Bull*, March 24, 1923.

4. "Aleister Crowley's Orgies in Sicily," *Sunday Express*, November 26, 1922. See "A Wizard of Wickedness," *John Bull*, March 17, 1923; "The King of Depravity," *John Bull*, March 10, 1923. For a good discussion of this popular literature, see Verter, "Dark Star Rising," pp. 257–343. As Verter comments, "These charges were not wholly unprovoked—Crowley and his avant-garde associates cultivated attention by publicizing their transgressive behavior" ("Dark Star Rising," p. 24).

5. Marian Dockerill [Alma Hirsig], *My Life in a Love Cult: A Warning to All Young Girls* (Dunellen, NJ: Better Publishing, 1928), p. 53. Hirsig had been a priestess in the Tantrik Order led by Pierre Bernard before writing this exposé. She also introduced Crowley to her sister, Leah, who then became one of the Beast's Scarlet Women.

6. Here I am using the phrase "Victorian era" to refer primarily to the period of Victoria's rule, ending in 1901. However, as Michael Mason argues, many of the cultural attitudes that we associate with the Victorian era would persist well into the early twentieth century. See Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender, and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

7. John Symonds, introduction to Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, edited by John Symonds (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), p. xxv. See also Kenneth Grant, *The Magical Revival* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), p. 126.

8. See Hugh Urban, "Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra, and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England," *Esoterica* 5 (2003): 138–92.

9. Hugh Urban, "The Cult of Ecstasy: Tantra, the New Age, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism." *History of Religions* 39 (2000): 268–304; and Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chap. 7.

10. Mason, *Making of Victorian Sexuality*, 9–12.

11. As Alex Owen observes, Crowley's sexual rites were "performed in a colonial context against a backdrop of fin-de-siècle 'decadence'" (*Place of Enchantment*, p. 187).

12. See Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986); Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 3 vols. (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

13. Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 2. See also Owen, *Place of Enchantment.*

14. Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 104.

15. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* edited and translated by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), pp. 29, 48.

16. Ibid., p. 29.

17. See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). Although he would later recant this argument in the 1966 edition, Marcuse made a direct link between sexual and political liberation: "The vision of a non-repressive culture . . . aims at a new relation between instincts and reason. . . . [L]iberated from the tyranny of repressive reason, the instincts tend toward free and lasting existential relations" (p. 197).

18. Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 9–10. See also Mason, *Making of Victorian Sexuality,* pp. 9–12.

19. Patricia Anderson, *When Passion Reigned: Sex and the Victorians* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 17–18.

20. Robert A. Nye, ed., *Sexuality: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 137. "Masturbation, homosexuality, promiscuity . . . prostitution . . . are all degenerate forms of adult sexual experience, since they are ascribed to the Other" (Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985], pp. 213–14).

21. Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1916), pp. 321–22.

22. D. H. Lawrence, quoted in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 157.

23. "The King of Depravity," *John Bull,* March 10, 1923.

24. Leslie Shepard, foreword to Aleister Crowley, *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* (Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1970), p. v.

25. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt,* pp. 4–5. Martin similarly describes Crowley as an expression of the late and post-Victorian Zeitgeist (*Orthodox Heresy,* p. 88). See also Owen, *Place of Enchantment.*

26. Colin Wilson, *The Occult* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 362.

27. Actually, the revelation came first through Crowley's wife, Rose, during their trip to Cairo, when the voice of the god Horus began to speak through her. She later revealed that the being speaking through her was an emissary of Horus named Aiwass, and Crowley eventually claimed to have received the *Book of the Law* directly from Aiwass without Rose's mediation.

28. Crowley, *Law Is for All,* p. 47. See Symonds, introduction to Crowley, *Confessions,* p. xxii.

29. Crowley, *The Book of Lies, Which Is Also Falsely Called Breaks* (New

York: Samuel Weiser, 1952), p. 100. "The only solution of the Social Problem is the creation of a class with the true patriarchal feeling" (*Book of Lies*, p. 172).

30. "One of my colleagues informed me . . . that the Fuhrer was looking for a philosophical basis for Nazi principles. . . . Some of my adherents in Germany are trying to approach the Fuhrer with a view to putting my Book of the Law in its proper position as the Bible of the New Aeon. . . . Hitler himself says emphatically in Mein Kampf that the world needs a new religion" (Crowley, letter to George Sylvester Viereck, July 31, 1936, in Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p. 378).

31. "The Law of Thelema is an altogether new instrument of Government infinitely elastic. . . . I offer this Law to His Most Gracious Majesty in my duty as a loyal and devoted subject and I suggest that it be adopted secretly by His Majesty's Government" (Crowley, "Propositions for Consideration of H.M. [His Majesty's] Government," written October 1936, sent January 1937, in Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p. 380).

32. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p. 126.

33. Shepard, foreword to Crowley, *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, pp. i–ii.

34. Wilson, *The Occult*, p. 373; cf. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, pp. 405ff.

35. Gerald Suster, *The Legacy of the Beast: The Life, Work, and Influence of Aleister Crowley* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1989), p. 75.

36. John Symonds, *The Beast 666: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (London: Pindar, 1997), p. 585.

37. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt*, p. 418.

38. Symonds, introduction to Crowley, *Confessions*, p. xiii.

39. Crowley, *Book of Lies*, p. 12. "When you have proved that God is merely a name for the sex instinct, it appears to me not far to the perception that the sex instinct is God" (Crowley, in Israel Regardie, *The Eye in the Triangle: An Interpretation of Aleister Crowley* [St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1970], p. 417).

40. Crowley, *Confessions*, pp. 874–75.

41. Crowley, *Book of Lies*, pp. 5–6. "Shortly after publication, the O.H.O. (Outer Head of the O.T.O.) came to me. . . . He said that since I was acquainted with the supreme secret of the Order, I must be allowed the IX° and obligated in regard to it. I protested that I knew no such secret. He said 'But you have printed it in the plainest language.' I said that I could not have done so because I did not know it. . . . [T]aking out a copy of THE BOOK OF LIES, he pointed to a passage in the despised chapter. It instantly flashed upon me. The entire symbolism not only of Free Masonry but of many other traditions blazed upon my spiritual vision. . . . I understood that I held in my hands the key to the future progress of humanity" (Crowley, *Book of Lies*, pp. 5–6).

42. Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 767. See also Peter R. Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo-Gnosis," Ordo Templi Orientis Phenomenon, www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/spermo.htm.

43. The text of the Mass can be found in *Magick: Liber Aba, Book Four* (New York: Weiser, 1998), appendix 6. As Kenneth Grant observes, "The word orgasm implies a sacred rite, or working, besides its indicatory meaning of emotional

paroxysm and swelling. The Gnostics call this rite the Mass of the Holy Ghost, and the male-female essences . . . were symbolized by bread and wine. The Gnostic Mass is . . . an eidolon of the metaphysical ecstasy or orgasm" (*Magical Revival,* p. 39).

44. Crowley, *Law Is for All,* III.23–4. On Crowley's recommended use of blood and human sacrifice, see Verter, "Dark Star Rising," pp. 311–12.

45. Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo-Gnosis." See also Crowley, *Magick: Liber Aba.* Two of the most important texts for the IX degree rituals are *Liber Agape* and *De Arte Magica,* republished as *Liber Agape, De Arte Magica* (Toronto: Kadath Press, 1986), and the diaries based on his sexual operations: John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, eds., *The Magical Record of the Beast 666: The Diaries of Aleister Crowley* (London: Duckworth, 1972). The IX degree rite was also published in censored form as "Two Fragments of Ritual," *Equinox* 1, no. 10 (1913): 81–86. See also Francis King, ed., *The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973).

46. Scott Michaelson, ed., *Portable Darkness: An Aleister Crowley Reader* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989), p. 143.

47. Stephen Skinner, *The Magical Diaries of Aleister Crowley* (Boston: Weiser Books, 1996), pp. 5–6. See Symonds and Grant, *Magical Record.*

48. John Carter, *Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1999), p. 90.

49. "Crowley quickly came to believe that he was a new magical messiah—the Lord of the New Aeon—whose doctrine would supersede . . . other outmoded religions which had constructed barriers to spiritual freedom. For him the basis of this freedom was sexuality" (Nevill Drury, *The History of Magic in the Modern Age* [New York: Caroll & Graf, 2000], 95).

50. Grant, *Magical Revival,* p. 126.

51. Aleister Crowley, *Eight Lectures on Yoga* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1992). He claimed to have achieved the highest yogic state of *samadhi* while meditating in Ceylon in 1901. See Crowley, "The Temple of Solomon the King," *Equinox* 1, no. 4 (1910): 166–67.

52. Crowley, quoted in Regardie, *Eye in the Triangle,* p. 63.

53. Crowley, in Grant, *Magical Revival,* pp. 36–37.

54. Crowley, *Liber Agape, De Arte Magica,* chap. 16.

55. On ritual transgression in Tantra, see Hugh Urban, "The Power of the Impure: Transgression, Violence, and Secrecy in Bengali Sakta Tantra and Modern Western Magic," *Numen* 50, no. 3 (2003): 269–308. On Crowley's possible Tantric influences, see Urban, "Unleashing the Beast."

56. Crowley, "Temple of Solomon," p. 161.

57. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt,* p. 141.

58. Elizabeth Sharpe, *The Secrets of the Kaula Circle* (London: Luzac, 1936), pp. 48–49.

59. Nik Douglas, *Spiritual Sex: Secrets of Tantra from the Ice Age to the New Millennium* (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), p. 208.

60. Grant, *Magical Revival,* pp. 82–83. This quotation comes from a notebook in the Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute. The press-mark is YC I, 20(b). The date is roughly June 1916.

61. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt,* pp. 243–44.

62. See David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yogini: "Tantric Sex" in Its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Hugh Urban, "The Conservative Character of Tantra: Secrecy, Sacrifice, and This-Worldly Power in Bengali Sakta Tantra," *International Journal of Tantric Studies* 6, no. 1 (2002).

63. Narendranath Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion* (Delhi: Manohar, 1982), p. v. See Urban, *Tantra,* chap. 1.

64. Grant, *Magical Revival,* pp. 7, 37.

65. Ibid., p. 127.

66. Letter to Kenneth Grant, 1946, in Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley* (London: Skoon, 1991).

67. Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley,* p. 49.

68. Even fine historians of modern witchcraft such as Ronald Hutton accept the belief that Crowley had "drawn upon oriental traditions of tantra" (*Triumph of the Moon,* p. 231).

69. In addition to his philosophical works and pornographic novels, Bataille also formed a secret society called *Acéphale.* The group engaged in various esoteric rites, including a planned (but never completed) human sacrifice. See Allan Stoekl, introduction to Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. xix.

70. Verter, "Dark Star Rising," pp. 275–343.

71. Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 5. See Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Religion and Culture,* edited by Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 57–71.

72. Bataille, *Erotism,* pp. 64, 48. See Bataille, *Accursed Share,* pp. 89–111; and Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 26–75.

73. Bataille, *Erotism,* pp. 11, 21–22.

74. Crowley, *Book of Lies,* p. 129. See Crowley, "Concerning Blasphemy," reprinted in *The Equinox,* vol. 3, no. 10 (New York: Thelema Publications, 1986), p. 222.

75. Crowley, "De Lege Libellum," in *Gems from the Equinox* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1974), p. 121.

76. John Symonds, *The Great Beast: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1952), p. 334.

77. Crowley, *The World's Tragedy* (private edition of 1910), xxvii. One of Crowley's most intense periods of experimentation in sex magic began in 1914, during his "Paris Workings," conducted with the help of his lover, Victor Neuberg. Crowley engaged in a variety of rites intended to achieve the goals of "In

voking the gods Jupiter and Mercury" and "getting these gods to supply Crowley and Neuberg with money." In the course of the operations, Crowley became possessed by an evil spirit posing as the god Mercury. This being informed them that the ultimate act of magic would require the "rape, ritual murder and dissection of the body of a young girl." Yet even the Beast recoiled from this act (Francis King, *The Magical World of Aleister Crowley* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977, p. 85). For a good discussion of his relations with Neuberg, see Owen, *Place of Enchantment.*

78. On the consumption of the "elixir," see especially *De Arte Magica,* chaps. 14–16, and his *Rex de Arte Regia* (in Symonds and Grant, *Magical Record of the Beast 666*), which is a written record of his experimentation with sexual magic. Many entries discuss preparation of the "elixir," the commingled male and female fluids integral to the OTO IX degree ritual (Symonds and Grant, *Magical Record,* pp. 45ff.

79. Crowley, 1918 diary (OTO archives), in Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt,* p. 265.

80. Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt,* p. 288.

81. Symonds and Grant, *Magical Record,* p. 235.

82. "De Arte Magica," in Michaelson, *Portable Darkness,* pp. 164–65. As Julius Evola suggests, Crowley saw in orgasm (as in drug experience) a means to create "breakages of consciousness" by pushing the mind to a point of extreme exhaustion and so opening it to the "supersensual": "The technique . . . was that of excess; through pain or pleasure, sex or intoxication, it was necessary to attain a condition of exhaustion taken to the extreme limit" (*Metafisica del sesso,* 1969; translation, *The Metaphysics of Sex* [New York: Inner Traditions, 1983], pp. 264, 266).

83. Crowley, *Book of Lies,* pp. 72, 25, 26.

84. Crowley, *Law Is for All,* p. 62.

85. Crowley, *Book of Lies,* pp. 40, 41, 65.

86. Ibid., p. 63.

87. Crowley, *The Vision and the Voice* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1911), pp. 385–86.

88. Crowley, "The Book of the Unveiling of Sangraal," in King, *Secret Rituals,* p. 221.

89. Michaelson, *Portable Darkness,* pp. 144, 145, 147. "It is better and easier that the other partner should be in ignorance of the sacred character of the Office" ("De Arte Magica," in *The Works of Aleister Crowley,* vol. 1 [Keighly, U.K.: Kadath Press, 1986], p. 39).

90. Thus the highest XI degree of Crowley's OTO passed beyond autoerotic and heterosexual practice to homoerotic practice. See Michaelson, *Portable Darkness,* pp. 144–45; Koenig, "Ordo Templi Orientis Spermo-Gnosis"

91. Bataille, *Accursed Share,* vol. 1, pp. 45–61.

92. Taussig, *Defacement,* p. 148.

93. Nikolas Schreck and Zeena Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh* (New York: Creation Books, 2002), p. 241. As Michaelson comments, "What can be made, then, of a grown man preoccupied with sex to the point that it came to rule his

'profession,' but who chose to hide his habits in the closet?" (*Portable Darkness*, p. 143).

94. Richard Metzger, "John Whiteside Parsons: Anti-Christ Superstar," Babalon.net, www.babalon.net/articles/metzger.html. The best biography of Parsons is Carter, *Sex and Rockets*. Parsons's most famous work is *Freedom Is a Two-Edged Sword* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 2001).

95. Carter, *Sex and Rockets*, p. 86.

96. See John Whiteside Parsons, *The Book of AntiChrist* (Edmonton, U.K.: Isis Research, 1980), and Parsons, *The Book of B.A.B.A.L.O.N.* (Berkeley: Ordo Templi Orientis, 1982).

97. Carter, *Sex and Rockets*, pp. 147–48.

98. Metzger, "John Whiteside Parsons."

99. Carter, *Sex and Rockets*, p. 99. Parsons's *Liber 49* orders his disciples to create a revival of witchcraft, when Babalon will "wander in the witchwood in the covens of old" (Schreck and Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh*, p. 258)

100. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 180.

101. See also Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, p. 183; and Owen, *Place of Enchantment*, p. 187.

102. Schreck and Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh*, p. 142.

103. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, p. 69.

104. Shepard, foreword to Crowley, *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, pp. vii–viii

5. THE YOGA OF POWER

1. One of the more articulate defenses of Evola is Joscelyn Godwin's foreword to Julius Evola, *Men among the Ruins: Post-war Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002). As Godwin predicts, "it will not be long before Evola begins to receive the tribute of doctoral dissertations, scholarly articles, and academic conferences" (p. vii). More balanced views may be found in H. T. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," in Julius Evola, *Men among the Ruins: Post-war Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), pp. 1–104; and Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 94–109.

2. Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 113n. See also Steven M. Wasserstrom, "The Lives of Baron Evola," *Alphabet City* 4 (1995): 84–90; and Wasserstrom, "Eliade and Evola," in *The Unknown, Remember Gate: Religious Experience and Hermeneutical Reflection*, edited by Elliot R. Wolfson and Jeffrey J. Kripal (New York: Seven Bridges Press, forthcoming).

3. Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1995), p. 318. For Evola's impact on Italian neo-fascist movements, see Franco Ferraresi, "Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right," *Archives européennes de sociologie* 28 (1987): 107–51.

4. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), p. 18. As Gustavo Benavides has argued in his study of Buddhologist Giuseppe Tucci, this feeling of loss and nostalgia was felt by many European intellectuals, who in the early twentieth century felt a profound disillusionment with the rapid changes of urbanization and a longing for "a world not touched by the icy winds of modernity" (Gustavo Benavides, "Giuseppe Tucci, or Buddhology in the Age of Fascism," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995], pp. 162, 178–79). See also Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World.*

5. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," pp. 4–5.

6. Guido Stucco, introduction to Julius Evola, *The Yoga of Power: Tantra, Shakti, and the Secret Way* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1992), p. x.

7. Julius Evola, "Four Excerpts from *Pagan Imperialism: Fascism before the Euro-Christian Peril* (1928), in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, ed., *Italian Fascism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 283. The original text has been republished as *Imperialismo pagano: il fascismo dinanzi al pericolo euro-cristiano* (Padova, Italy: Edizioni di Ar, 1978). See also Thomas Sheehan, "*Diventare Dio:* Julius Evola and the Metaphysics of Fascism," *Stanford Italian Review* 6 (1986): 279–92.

8. Berman, *All That Is Solid*, p. 15. See Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chap. 5; Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World.*

9. Thomas Sheehan, "Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist," *Social Research* 48 (1981): 61.

10. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 11. See René Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World* (London: Luzac, 1942); Julius Evola, *René Guénon: A Teacher for Modern Times* (Edmonds, WA: Sure Fire Press, 1993). On relations between Evola and Guénon, see Renato Del Ponte, preface to Julius Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Magical Techniques for the Magus* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2001).

11. Evola, "Four Excerpts," pp. 280–81. "Anti-Europe is anti-Christianity. Christianity is the root of the evil that has corrupted the West. . . . In its frenetic subversion of every hierarchy; in its exaltation of the weak, the disinherited, those without lineage and without tradition; in its call to 'love' and 'believe,' and to yield; in its rancor toward everything that is force, self-sufficiency, knowledge and aristocracy" (p. 284).

12. Evola, "Four Excerpts," pp. 290, 291–92.

13. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 11.

14. Evola, "Four Excerpts," pp. 288–89. As Evola put it in his periodical *Le Torre:* "Up to the point that Fascism follows and defends these principles [of hierarchy and the imperial ideal] up to that point we can consider ourselves Fascists. And that is all" (Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 41). See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, p. 101.

15. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 40.

16. Ibid., p. 47. See Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Padova, Italy: Edizioni di Ar, 1978).

17. Stucco, introduction to Julius Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1995), p. xvi.

18. Evola, "Four Excerpts," p. 290.

19. Stucco, introduction to Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World*, p. xvi.

20. H. T. Hansen, preface to the American edition of Evola, *Men among the Ruins: Post-war Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), p. xiii.

21. Evola, "Lo Stato, Potenza e Liberta," *Lo Stato Democratico* 1, no. 7 (1925) quoted in Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 35. For Evola's later reflections on Fascism, see *Il fascismo visto dalla destra, con in appendice 'Note sul Terzo Reich'* (Rome: G. Volpe, 1970).

22. Stucco, introduction to Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World*, p. xv.

23. Ibid., pp. xvi, xvii.

24. Hansen, preface to Evola, *Men among the Ruins*, p. xv. See Philippe Baillet, "Avertissement du traducture," in Evola, *Le Fascisme vu de droite* (Paris, France: Puiseaux, 1993).

25. *Vita Italiana* (August 15, 1938), quoted in Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 61.

26. Hansen, preface to Evola, *Men among the Ruins*, p. xv. This connection of Evola with the SD has been made by Christophe Boutin in *Politique et Tradition: Julius Evola dans le siècle, 1898–1974* (Paris: 1992), pp. 241–43. Others like Baillet dispute this claim owing to lack of evidence.

27. Hansen, preface to Evola, *Men among the Ruins*, p. xiii; cf. Dana Lloyd Thomas, "Il filogermanesimo di Julius Evola: le reazioni dello stato fascista," *Politica Romana* 4 (1997): 263–93.

28. The SS kept a dossier on Evola in the Correspondence Administration Department of Himmel's personal staff. According to the SS, "The ultimate and secret goal of Evola's theories and projects is most likely an *insurrection of the old aristocracy* against the modern world, which is foreign to the idea of nobility. . . . His overall character is marked by the feudal aristocracy of old. . . . Hence it follows that National Socialism sees nothing to be gained by putting itself at the disposal of Baron Evola" (Stucco, introduction to Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World*, p. xviii).

29. Evola, *Men among the Ruins*, pp. 120–21.

30. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, p. 502. See Richard Drake, "Julius Evola and the Ideological Origins of the Radical Right in Contemporary Italy," in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, edited by Peter H. Merkl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy after the War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 43–49; Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, p. 318.

31. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. xiii; see Thomas, " Il filogermanesimo di Julius Evola."

32. Julius Evola, *The Metaphysics of Sex* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1983), p. 216.

33. Evola, "Four Excerpts," p. 179.

34. Benito Mussolini, "Al popolo di Lucania" (August 27, 1936), in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini,* edited by Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, (Florence, Italy : La Fenice, 1951–62), vol. 28, pp. 29–40.

35. David Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 59. On fascism and concerns with reproduction, see also Lesley Caldwell, "Reproducers of the Nation: Women and the Family in Fascist Policy," in *Rethinking Italian Fascism: Capitalism, Populism, and Culture,* edited by David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986), pp. 110–41; Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–45* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A History of Italian Fertility during the Last Two Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

36. Benito Mussolini, "Il discorso dell'Ascensione" (1927), in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini,* edited by Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel (Florence, Italy: La Fenice, 1951–62), vol. 22, p. 364.

37. Horn, *Social Bodies,* pp. 7–8, 66.

38. Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World,* p. 169.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., pp. 42–46.

41. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 9.

42. Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World,* p. 167.

43. Renato del Ponte, preface to Julius Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2001), p. xvi.

44. Jacket advertisement for Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic.* See also Stucco, introduction to Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World,* p. xvi.

45. This is the opinion of H. T. Hansen, who is an expert on both Evola and Naglowska (personal communication, March 2005). See also Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World,* p. 103.

46. Ea, "Considerations on Magic and Its Powers," in Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic,* pp. 258–59, 263.

47. Ibid., pp. 261–62.

48. Ibid., pp. 259, 263.

49. Evola, quoted in Del Ponte, preface to *Introduction to Magic,* p. xxxvii.

50. Del Ponte, preface to *Introduction to Magic,* p. xx.

51. Editorial insert "To the Readers," in *Ur,* II, 11–12 (1928), in Del Ponte, preface to *Introduction to Magic,* p. xx.

52. Julius Evola, "Our Activity in 1930—To the Readers," *Krur* (December 1929), in Del Ponte, preface to *Introduction to Magic,* p. xxi.

53. "The caste system is one of the main expressions of the traditional sociopolitical order, a 'form' victorious over chaos and the embodiment of metaphysical ideas of stability and justice. The division of individuals into castes . . .

according to their nature and to the different ranks of activities they exercise is found with the same traits in all higher forms of traditional civilizations" (Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World*, p. 89).

54. Julius Evola, "What Tantrism Means to Modern Western Civilization," *East and West* 1 (1950): 28.

55. Footnote (probably written by Evola) to "Knowledge as Liberation," a translation of the *Kularnava Tantra* in Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic*, p. 70n. Elsewhere Evola observes that *vira* is "a term with the same Latin root *vir* which does not describe an ordinary man but rather an eminent man . . . a manly and heroic nature." (Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 54).

56. Evola, *Yoga of Power*, pp. 189–90.

57. Ibid., pp. 187–88.

58. Ibid., p. 15.

59. Hansen, "Julius Evola's Political Endeavors," p. 31.

60. Evola, "Four Excerpts," p. 283.

61. Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 189. See also Wasserstrom, "Lives of Baron Evola."

62. Evola, *Metaphysics of Sex*, p. 111.

63. Evola, *Yoga of Power*, p. 188.

64. Evola, "Four Excerpts," p. 291.

65. Evola, *Metaphysics of Sex*, p. 109.

66. Ibid.

67. Evola, "Four Excerpts," p. 291.

68. Evola, *Metaphysics of Sex*, p. 107.

69. Evola, "Four Excerpts," p. 289.

70. Berman, *All That Is Solid*, p. 18.

71. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell 1989), p. 15. "This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without ends . . . enclosed by nothingness . . . a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence. . . . This *world is the will to power—and nothing besides!*" (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, in Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 274).

72. Sheehan, "Myth and Violence," p. 50. See Wasserstrom, "Lives of Baron Evola."

73. Del Ponte, preface to *Introduction to Magic*, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii.

6. THE GODDESS AND THE GREAT RITE

1. The term *neo-pagan* seems to have first been used by F. Hugh O'Donnell in 1904, who was criticizing the theater of W. B. Yeats and Maude Gonn, which he saw as an attempt to re-create a kind of poetic, magical Celtic religion. Later, in the 1980s, Oberon Zell claimed to have coined the term in his periodical *Green Egg*. See "Wicca," on the University of Virginia "New Religious Movements" Web site (http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/wicca.html#2).

2. Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. vii.

3. Francis King, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism* (Dorset, U.K.: Prism Press, 1989), p. 179.

4. Adrian Ivakhiv, "The Resurgence of Magical Religion as a Response to the Crisis of Modernity: A Postmodern Depth Psychological Perspective," in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, edited by James R. Lewis (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 255.

5. Doreen Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (Blaine, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1978), p. 12.

6. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, pp. 3–51.

7. Charles Leland, *Aradia; or, The Gospel of the Witches* (New York: Weiser, 1974).

8. Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); and Murray, *The God of the Witches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

9. See Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 48.

10. Letter of 1914, quoted in John Symonds, *The Great Beast: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1952), pp. 194–95.

11. Some believe Fortune was actually expelled from the Golden Dawn by Moina for revealing some of the Order's Inner Secrets on sexual magic (Donald Michael Kraig, *Modern Sex Magick: Secrets of Erotic Spirituality* [St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998], p. 29).

12. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 183. See Dion Fortune, *Sane Occultism* (London: Rider, 1929), pp. 127–28; see Violet M. Firth, *The Problem of Purity* (London: Rider, 1928); Dion Fortune, *Training and Work of an Initiate* (London: Rider, 1930), pp. 130–32.

13. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 185. Dion Fortune's novel *The Goat-Foot God* (London: Wyndham, 1976) honored Pan as the prime symbol of a paganism needed to heal the modern world and referred to this resurgent force as "Vitamin P." During the years 1937–39, Fortune also performed a ceremony in which she took the part of the goddess herself. See Alan Richardson, *Priestess: The Life and Magic of Dion Fortune* (Wellingborough, U.K.: Aquarian, 1987), pp. 208–9, 225.

14. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 187. There is a rumor that Fortune visited Crowley in the 1930s to ask how to invoke Mercury. Kenneth Grant recalls that she visited Crowley and discussed "the possibility of reviving the pagan attitudes to cosmic and elemental forces" (Janine Chapman, *Quest for Dion Fortune* [Samuel Weiser, 1993], p. 145).

15. Dion Fortune, *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage* (1930, reprint; York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 2000), pp. 28, 29.

16. Ibid., p. 80.

17. Doreen Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (London: Hale, 1989), pp. 37, 47

18. See J. L. Bracelin, *Gerald Gardner: Witch* (London: Octagon Press, 1960).

19. Nevill Drury, *The History of Magic in the Modern Age* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1991), p. 144.

20. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 209. See Doreen Valiente, "The Search for Old Dorothy," in Janet Farrar and Stewart Farrar, *The Witches' Way* (London: Robert Hale, 1984), pp. 283–84; Philip Heselton, *Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Witchcraft Revival* (Freshfields, U.K.: Capall Bann, 2000).

21. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 210.

22. Ibid., p. 212.

23. Ibid., p. 206; cf. Francis King, *Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1971), pp. 179–80.

24. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 218. According to a more elaborate version of this story, Crowley was initiated into the witch cult in 1899 or 1900 after being introduced to it by a friend in the Golden Dawn, Allan Bennett. But Crowley was expelled from the coven because its high priestess thought him "a dirty minded, evilly disposed vicious little monster." See E. W. Liddell and Michael Howard, *The Pickingill Papers* (Chievely, U.K.: Capall Bann, 1994), pp. 19–30.

25. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 227.

26. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Way*, p. 3. Between 1981 and 1984 the Farrars, aided by Doreen Valiente, produced a critical edition which attempted to establish a standard text.

27. Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (1954; reprint, New York: Citadel, 1955), p. 42.

28. Ibid., p. 43.

29. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, pp. 213–14.

30. Ibid., p. 214. See Doreen Valiente, "Witchcraft and Fertility," *The Cauldron* (Samhain, 1981): n.p.

31. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 241.

32. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, p. 115.

33. Ibid., p. 101.

34. Ibid., pp. 155, 157.

35. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 208; cf. Bracelin, *Gerald Gardner*, pp. 166–67.

36. Amado Crowley, *The Secrets of Aleister Crowley* (Leatherhead, U.K.: Diamond, 1991), pp. 105–32.

37. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 406; Janet Farrar and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible: The Complete Witches' Handbook* (Custer, WA: Phoenix, 1996), pp. 32–33, 171–72.

38. Gerald Gardner, *The Book of Shadows*, quoted in Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, p. 148. See also Doreen Valiente, *An ABC of Witchcraft, Past and Present* (London: Robert Hale, 1973), p. 156.

39. *The Book of Shadows*, in Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Bible*, p. 53. "And the greatest joy of all, the touch of the body of your beloved thrills your inmost soul, and so your body gives out its utmost power . . . then the mind must seize and mould the power generated, and redirect it to the desired end with all the force and frenzy of the imagination" (*Book of Shadows*, in Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, p. 148).

40. Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow,* p. 101. Heselton also directly compares Gardner's use of sexual rites to Reich's orgone energy (*Wiccan Roots,* pp. 286–87).

41. Scrire [Gerald Gardner], *High Magic's Aid* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1975), p. 229.

42. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 225.

43. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Bible,* pp. 32–33. "To the witch, sex is holy—an unashamed and beautiful polarity force which is intrinsic to the nature of the universe" (Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Bible,* pp. 32–33).

44. Jorg Wichmann, *Wicca: Die magische Kunst der Hexen. Geschichte, Mythen, Rituale* (Berlin: Editions Magus, 1984), quoted in Frater U. D., *Secrets of Western Sex Magic* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2001), p. 179.

45. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Way,* pp. 36–37.

46. Ibid., p. 305 n. 14.

47. Ibid., p. 33.

48. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 231.

49. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Way,* p. 304 n. 7.

50. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 231. In the *panchamakara,* "women and men sat alternatively in a circle at midnight, presided by a leader and by a beautiful naked priestess representing the goddess. A ritual meal was followed by sexual intercourse as an act of worship. The seating plan of the participants is exactly that of Gardner's witches, who also had a presiding couple in which a woman represented a goddess" (Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon,* p. 231).

51. Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow,* pp. 137–39.

52. Ibid., p. 151.

53. Gardner, *Book of Shadows,* quoted in Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow,* p. 149.

54. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Bible,* pp. 171–72.

55. Ibid.. pp. 170–71.

56. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon,* p. 231. See Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow,* pp. 134–35.

57. King, *Modern Ritual Magic,* p. 180.

58. Valiente, *Witchcraft for Tomorrow,* p. 98.

59. Ibid., p. 134.

60. Ibid.

61. Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 53. For general background on radical feminism, see Barbara A. Crow, *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Diane Bell and Renate Klein, *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed* (North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1996).

62. Elizabeth Puttick, *Women in New Religions: In Search of Community, Sexuality, and Spiritual Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 245.

63. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 13, 19, 43.

64. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 1.

65. Ibid., pp. 175, 179, 183.

66. Ibid., p. 413.

67. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Bible*, p. 157.

68. Z Budapest, interview with Cheri Lesh, "Goddess Worship: The Subversive Religion," *Twelve Together*, Los Angeles, May 1975.

69. Interview for the documentary *The Occult Experience*, produced for Channel 10, Sydney, Australia, in 1985 and released on Sony Home Video.

70. See interview with Cheri Lesh, "Goddess Worship"; Drury, *History of Magic*, pp. 159–60.

71. "Starhawk's Bio and Bibliography," Starhawk.org, www.starhawk.org/starhawk/bio.html.

72. Starhawk, "The Goddess," in *A New Creation: America's Contemporary Spiritual Voices*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 213–14. See also Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), p. 278.

73. Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "Women in Occult America," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, edited by Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 190.

74. Robin Moran, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 539.

75. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Way*, pp. 193–94.

76. Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), p. 150–51.

77. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 13. See Diana J. Fuss, *Essentially Speaking* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex," *Feminist Issues* (1982): 63–68.

78. See especially Gayatri Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 141, 152; Susan Stanford Friedman, "Making History: Reflections on Feminism, Narrative, and Desire," in *Feminism Beside Itself*, edited by Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 11–54.

79. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 147–49. See also Wittig, "Category of Sex."

80. Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Way*, pp. 54, 170.

81. Susan Greenwood, "Feminist Witchcraft," in *Practising Feminism*, edited by Nickie Charles and Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 114.

82. Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark*, p. 152.

83. Lynna Landstreet, "Alternate Currents: Revisioning Polarity; Or, What's a Nice Dyke Like You Doing in a Polarity-Based Tradition Like This?" The Witches' Voice, Witchvox.com, www.witchvox.com/gay/alternate_currents.html (1993). For a similar critique see Storm Faerywolf, "The Queer Craft: Rethinking Magickal Polarity," The Witches' Voice, Witchvox.com, www.witchvox.com/gay/queercraft.html.

84. Nexy Jo, "The Wiccan Mysteries of Gender," The Witches' Voice, Witchvox.com, www.witchvox.com/gay/gendermysteries.html. Mary Grey has also pointed out that Goddess spirituality bears the dangers of escapism, dualism, and indulgence in unhelpful nostalgia (*Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption, and Christian Tradition* [London: SPCK, 1989], p. 53).

85. See Christopher Penczak. *Gay Witchcraft: Empowering the Tribe* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2003); Bruce Wilborn, *The Gay Wicca Book* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2002); Faerywolf, "Queer Craft." On radical faeries, see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (New York: Penguin, 1986), pp. 338–48.

86. Garan du and Sabazius, "The Minoan Tradition," The Witches' Voice, Witchvox.com, www.witchvox.com/trads/trad_minoan.html (2001).

87. Adrian, "Beyond Pink & Blue: Gender Bending and Transgender Realities in Pagan Culture," *newWitch: Not Your Mother's Broomstick* 4 (2003): 52.

88. Taylor Ellmore, "Invoking Buffy: Discovering the Magic of Pop Icons," *newWitch: Not Your Mother's Broomstick* 4 (2003): 56–58.

7. THE AGE OF SATAN

1. Arthur Lyons, *The Second Coming: Satanism in America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), p. 1.

2. Anton Szandor LaVey, quoted in Lyons, *Second Coming,* p. 185.

3. Anton Szandor LaVey, conversation, 1986, quoted in Arthur Lyons, *Satan Wants You: The Cult of Devil Worship in America* (New York: Mysterious Press, 1988), p. 104.

4. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), p. 254.

5. Sheila Jeffreys, "The Sexual Revolution Was for Men," in *Sexuality,* edited by Robert A. Nye (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 132–33.

6. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 253.

7. Robert Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 10–11.

8. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p. 85, summarizing Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* (1612).

9. Russell, *Witchcraft,* p. 296 n. 12.

10. Richard Cavendish, *The Black Arts: An Absorbing Account of Witchcraft, Demonology, Astrology, and Other Mystical Practices throughout the Ages* (New York: Perigree Books, 1967), p. 327.

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8. SEXUAL CHAOS

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5. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell, 1989), p. 13; cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983); John McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

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mental criteria as the sole . . . standard of worthwhile knowledge. A willingness to combine symbols from disparate codes or frameworks of meaning, even at the cost of disjunction . . . a celebration of spontaneity, superficiality, fragmentation, irony and playfulness, and a willingness to abandon the search for over-arching . . . myths, narratives and frameworks of knowledge" ("Religion, Modernity and Post-Modernity," in *Religion: Contemporary Issues,* edited by Bryan Wilson [London: Bellew Publishing, 1992], pp. 11–23).

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29. Spare, *Book of Pleasure.*

30. Ibid.

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is interesting in itself insofar as the interesting thing is to play moves. And to play moves means precisely to develop ruses, to set the imagination to work" (Lyotard and Thebaud, *Just Gaming*, p. 61).

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92. Lawrence, "God On Line," p. 236.

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94. Featherstone, *Consumer Culture*, pp. 114, 170–71; cf. Altman, *Global Sex*.

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96. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. xii–xiii. See Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), p. 251.

97. Carroll, *PsyberMagick*, p. 21. As one recent magician named Nema

writes, "What sort of work does Sex Magick do? . . . it can help in improving income (anoint a coin or bill with the sexual fluids' elixir, make an offering of the pleasure involved to a god form associated with good fortune . . .)" ("By the Same Mouth," in Kraig, *Modern Sex Magick*, pp. 205–6).

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CONCLUSION

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9. Michel Foucault, "Preface to Transgression," in *Religion and Culture*, edited by Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 70.

10. Michael Taussig, "Transgression," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 361.

11. Christopher S. Hyatt, Lon Milo Duquette, Diane Rose Hartmann, and Gary Ford, *Taboo: Sex, Religion, and Magick* (Temple, AZ: New Falcon, 2001), p. 32. "If we begin the realization of our fantasies, we begin to participate in what it is to be gods" (Don Webb, "A Sex Magic Primer," Networked Interzones, www.altx.com/interzones2/violet/sex.magic.html (1995).

12. See Maria de Naglowska, "Le rite sacré de l'amour magique," Supplément de *La Fleche, Organe D'Action Magique* (Paris, 1932): 16–18; Julius Evola, *The Metaphysics of Sex* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1983), pp. 261–63.

13. Schreck and Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh*, p. 192.

14. Ibid., p. 191.

15. See Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, vol. 1, *Capital* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 392. As Michael Taussig explains, "Fetishism denotes the attribution of life, power and even dominance to otherwise inanimate objects and presupposes the draining of these qualities from the human actors who bestow the attribution. Thus in the case of commodity fetishism, social relationships are dismembered and appear to dissolve into relationships between mere things—the products of labor exchanged on the market—so that the sociology of exploitation masquerades as a natural relationship between systemic artifacts. Definite social relationships are reduced to the magical matrix of things" (Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, pp. 31–32).

16. James W. Bernauer and Michael Mahon, "The Ethics of Michel Foucault," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 147. "One of the dominant themes in post-Freudian western thinking about sex has been to explain why sexuality is so central to our sense of self, and thus the basis of both psychological and political identity" (Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 104).

17. Altman, *Global Sex*, p. 157.

18. Ibid., pp. 58, 106. "This attempt to link sexuality with the political is far less fashionable today, where sexuality is more commonly linked with contemporary capitalism, and we increasingly think of ourselves as consumers rather than citizens" (Altman, *Global Sex*, p. 105). See also Angus McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History* (London: Blackwell, 1999), p. 1.

19. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Desublimation," in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, edited by Charles Lemert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 472. "There are repressive modes of desublimation, compared with which the sublimated drives and objectives contain more deviation, more freedom and more refusal to heed the social taboos . . . such repressive desublimation is indeed operative in the sexual and . . . it operates as the by-product of the social controls of technological reality, which extend liberty while intensifying domination" (Marcuse, "Repressive Desublimation," pp. 472–73).

20. Herbert Marcuse, "Political Preface 1966," in *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. xi–xii.

21. Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *The Final Foucault*, edited by James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 3–4.

22. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 97.

23. Nancy Harstock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, edited by Charles Lemert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 552. See Lois McNay, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 1994), pp. 164–65.

24. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 110.

25. Harstock, "Foucault on Power," p. 553.

26. Altman, *Global Sex*, p. 162–63.

27. H. H. Bell, *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Conventions* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 42; and *Chicago Tribune*, quoted in P. B. Randolph *P. B. Randolph: The "Learned Pundit" and "Man with Two Souls," His Curious Life, Works, and Career* (Boston: Randolph, 1877), p. 16.

28. Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 250.

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